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MARINO FALIERO

LONDON : PRINTED BY  
SPOTTISWOODE AND CO., NEW-STREET SQUARE  
AND PARLIAMENT STREET

# MARINO FALIERO

A TRAGEDY

BY

ALGERNON CHARLES SWINBURNE

London

CHATTO & WINDUS, PICCADILLY

1885

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*DEDICATION.*

TO AURELIO SAFFI.

I.

YEAR after year has fallen on sleep, till change  
Hath seen the fourth part of a century fade,  
Since you, a guest to whom the vales were strange  
Where Isis whispers to the murmuring shade  
Above her face by winds and willows made,  
And I, elate at heart with reverence, met.  
Change must give place to death ere I forget  
The pride that change of years has quenched not yet.

II.

Pride from profoundest humbleness of heart  
Born, self-uplift at once and self-subdued,  
Glowed, seeing his face whose hand had borne such part  
In so sublime and strange vicissitude  
As then filled all faint hearts with hope renewed  
To think upon, and triumph ; though the time  
Were dense and foul with darkness cast from crime  
Across the heights that hope was fain to climb.

## III.

Hope that had risen, a sun to match the sun  
That fills and feeds all Italy with light,  
Had set, and left the crowning work undone  
That raised up Rome out of the shadow of night :  
Yet so to have won the worst, to have fought the fight,  
Seemed, as above the grave of hope cast down  
Stood faith, and smiled against the whole world's frown,  
A conquest lordlier than the conqueror's crown.

## IV.

To have won the worst that chance could give, and worn  
The wreath of adverse fortune as a sign  
More bright than binds the brows of victory, borne  
Higher than all trophies borne of tyrants shine—  
What lordlier gift than this, what more divine,  
Can earth or heaven make manifest, and bid  
Men's hearts bow down and honour? Fate lies hid,  
But not the work that true men dared and did.

## V.

The years have given and taken away since then  
More than was then foreseen of hope or fear.  
Fallen are the towers of empire : all the men  
Whose names made faint the heart of the earth to hear  
Are broken as the trust they held so dear  
Who put their trust in princes : and the sun  
Sees Italy, as he in heaven is, one ;  
But sees not him who spake, and this was done.

## VI.

Not by the wise man's wit, the strong man's hand,  
By swordsman's or by statesman's craft or might,  
Sprang life again where life had left the land,  
And light where hope nor memory now saw light :  
Not first nor most by grace of these was night  
Cast out, and darkness driven before the day  
Far as a battle-broken host's array  
Flies, and no force that fain would stay it can stay.

## VII.

One spirit alone, one soul more strong than fate,  
One heart whose heat was as the sundawn's fire,  
Fed first with flame as heaven's immaculate  
Faith, worn and wan and desperate of desire :  
And men that felt that sacred breath suspire  
Felt by mere speech and presence fugitive  
The holy spirit of man made perfect give  
Breath to the lips of death, that death might live.

## VIII.

Not all as yet is yours, nor all is ours,  
That shall, if righteousness and reason be,  
Fulfil the trust of time with happier hours  
And set their sons who fought for freedom free ;  
Even theirs whose faith sees, as they may not see,  
Your land and ours wax lovelier in the light  
Republican, whereby the thrones most bright  
Look hoar and wan as eve or black as night.

## IX.

Our words and works, our thoughts and songs turn thither,  
Toward one great end, as waves that press and roll.  
Though waves be spent and ebb like hopes that wither,  
These shall subside not ere they find the goal.

We know it, who yet with unforgetful soul  
See shine and smile, where none may smite or strive,  
Above us, higher than clouds and winds can drive,  
The soul beloved beyond all souls alive.



## DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

MARINO FALIERO, *Doge of Venice.*

THE DUCHESS, *his wife.*

BERTUCCIO FALIERO, *nephew to the Doge.*

BENINTENDE, *Grand Chancellor.*

SER MICHELE STENO.

SER NICCOLÒ LIONI.

*The Admiral of the Arsenal.*

FILIPPO CALENDARO.

BERTUCCIO ISRAELLO.

BELTRAMO, *a follower of Lioni's.*

*Lords, Ladies, Senators, Officers, Guards, and Attendants.*

SCENE, VENICE.

*Time, 1355.*



## ACT I.

SCENE I.—*The balcony of the ducal palace overlooking the Piazza San Marco.*

MARINO FALIERO and the DUCHESS, seated: *Lords, Ladies, and Attendants behind: among them* SER MICHELE STENO and SER NICCOLÒ LIONI.

FALIERO.

The sun fights hard against us ere he die.  
Canst thou see westward?

DUCHESS.

Not the huntsmen yet.

FALIERO.

Nay, nor the bull, belike: but ere they come  
There should be stirring in the crowd far off:  
Some wind should wake these waters, and some wave  
Swell toward us from the sunset: but the square  
Seems breathless as the very sea to left  
That sleeps and thinks it summer. Thou shalt know  
Full soon if love and liking toward mine own

Have made mine old eyes blind or wrecked the wits  
That once were mine for judgment.

DUCHESS.

Nay, my lord,  
I doubt not—nor did ever—

FALIERO.

Nay, my love,  
But thou didst never trust : I say, my son,  
My brother's born, made mine by verier love  
Than every father bears his own, shall find  
For manfulness and speed and noble skill  
No master and no match of all his mates  
In all the goodliest flower of lordliest youth  
That lightens all this city. Dost thou think  
The day's chase shall not leave him spirit and strength  
To dance thy merriest maidens down to-night  
Even till the first bell ring the banquet in ?  
Nay, we shall find him as thy sire and I  
Were fifty years or sixty since, when life  
As glad and gallant spurred our light strong limbs  
As quickens now these young men's toward the chase  
That knits their thews for battle.

DUCHESS.

How the sun  
Burns, now so near the mountains ! even at noon  
It smote not sorer.

FALIERO.

Old men set not so.

A goodly grace it were to close up life  
And seal the record fast of perfect days  
If we might save one hour of strength and youth  
To reap and be requickened ere we die  
With royal repossession of the past  
For sixty sovereign heartbeats pulsed of time,  
And with one last full purple throb let life  
Pass, and leave death's face glowing : yet perchance  
It should but seem the harder so to die.  
This is no festal fancy : but thy brow  
Is graver than the time is. Art thou not  
Weary ?

DUCHESS.

Not yet : nay, surely, no.

FALIERO.

Thy smile

Is brighter than thy voice.

DUCHESS.

My heart may be  
More light than rings my tongue, since neither knows  
A cause to teach it sadness.

STENO.

Did you mark

That ?

[*Aside to the lady next him.*]

LADY.

What ? no, nothing, I.

STENO.

She knows no cause :

What cause of sadness may so fair a face  
Know, mated with so blithe a bridegroom's? Nay,  
If fourscore years can pleasure not a wife,  
There is no cheer nor comfort in white hairs,  
No solace in man's dotage.

LADY.

Hush !

STENO.

And Fie !

Should not those words run still in couple? Ha !  
The woman that cries Hush bids kiss : I learnt  
So much of her that taught me kissing.

LADY.

Then

A foolish tutoress taught a graceless knave  
Folly.

STENO.

That cries on vengeance : should my lip  
Retaliate, would you cry not louder?

LADY.

Peace !

STENO.

What if I choose not peace but war?

LADY.

My lord,

You wrong this presence and yourself, and me  
Most, and with least respect, of all.

STENO.

Respect !

Nay, I revere you more than mine own heart,  
Which rests your servile chattel : for myself,  
I know not aught worth reverence in me, save  
Love,—love of one too sweet and hard, that wears  
A flower in face, at heart a stone, and turns  
My face to tears, my heart to fire, and laughs  
As loud for scorn as men for mirth who look  
’To see the duke’s brave nephew bring him back  
For gift and trophied treasure of the chase  
A broad bull’s pair of—tributes.

LIONI.

Hark you, sir :

Speak lower : and speak not here at all.

STENO.

St. Mark !

Art thou my tutor?

LIONI.

Ay—to whip thee dumb,  
Or strike thy folly dead at once. Be still,  
For shame’s sake—not for honour’s would I bid  
Thee.

STENO.

While this lady’s eyes regard us, dumb  
I will be : but hereafter—

LIONI.

Be but now  
Silent: I bid thee now no more: but this  
Thou shalt be.

STENO.

See now, sweet, what friends he hath,  
Our good grey head of Venice! if one speak  
At hunting-time of horns or tusks or spoil  
That hot young hunters laugh at, straight they cry,  
Peace, and respect, and spare our master. Christ!  
What friends! were I fourscore, and thou—thyself,  
Wouldst thou be half so good a friend of mine?  
Ha? Nay, but answer—nay, thou shalt.

LADY.

I will  
Once, and no more. Keep silence: and forget  
If ever word of such a tongue as thine  
Found audience of me.

STENO.

Am I then indeed  
Fourscore, that I should not remember? Ha!  
Nor woman am I, to forget—but some  
Love dotards more than men.

LADY.

Who loves not men  
May love such things as grovel of thy kind,  
And deem such love not monstrous.



STENO.

Nay, but this

Asks answer of man's lips—not of his tongue—

Nay!

FALIERO.

Who is there that knows not where he is  
And dreams the place a brothel? Gentlemen,  
If here be any, need is none to bid  
You spurn him out of sight.

LIONI.

Go ; if thou hast

Or shame or sense, abide not here till men

Hurl thee with fists and feet away.

STENO.

By God,

I will be—God forsake me else—revenged.

Sirs, lay not hand upon me.

[*Exit.*]

FALIERO.

Dear my child,

Thine eyes are still set sunwards : hast thou heard

Nought of this brawl?

DUCHESS.

I would not.

FALIERO.

Thou dost well

God knows, no base or violent thing should come,

Had I God's power, in hearing or in sight  
Of such as thou art.

DUCHESS.

Then were earth too soft  
For souls to look on heaven ; but what I may  
I would eschew of meaner knowledge.

FALIERO.

God

Guard thee from all unworthy thee, or fit  
For earthlier sense than feeds thy spirit and keeps  
Heaven still within thine eyeshot. Dost thou see  
There, in that fiery field of heaven that fades  
Beyond the extremest Euganean, aught  
Worth quite the rapture of those eyes that yearn  
Too high to look on Venice?

DUCHESS.

Sir, methought

We were not worthy—nor was ever man  
Made in God's loftiest likeness—even to see  
Such wonder and such glory live and die.

FALIERO.

And yet we live that look on it. This sight  
Is verily other far than we beheld  
When first October brought thy husband back  
From Romeward, here to take on him the state  
Wherein we now sit none the lower or less  
For the ominous entrance to it. I never saw

A noon so like a nightfall : that we breathe  
Unwithered yet of wicked signs, and see  
The world still shine about us, might rebuke  
All fearful faith in evil.

DUCHESS.

Yet was that  
A woful welcome : all about the prow  
Darkness, and all ahead and all astern  
And all beside no sign but cloud adrift,  
All blind as death and bitter : and at last—  
I would not bring it on your memory back  
Who fain would cast it out of mine.

FALIERO.

At last  
To land between the columns where they die  
Whom justice damns by judgment. Nay, are we  
Traitors or thieves or manslayers, that the sign  
Should make us wan with forethought? This foretold,  
If aught foretell men aught, that he who came  
Should bring men equal justice ; do them right,  
Or die—as gladlier would I die than stand  
In equal eyes of equitable men  
A judge approved unrighteous. Be not thou  
Moved, when the world is gracious and the sun  
Speaks comfort, by remembrance of a sign  
That lied, and was not presage. We came in  
Darkling : and lo now if this earth and sea  
Be not as heaven about us, and the time  
Not more elate with fair festivity

Than should our hearts be—yea, though nought were  
here

Save this bare beauty shown of wave and sky  
To lift them up for love's sake. Has the world,  
Think'st thou, so good a gift as this to give  
Men's eyes that know not Venice?

DUCHESS.

Nay : but you,  
Lord of two wives, love least the first espoused  
Albeit the younger of them : more than me  
You love that old hoar bride who caught your ring  
Last autumn, and to-day laughs large and loud  
On all that sail or swim : you dare not say  
You have not loved her longest.

FALIERO.

But I dare  
Swear, though no little thing this be to swear  
For one whose heart and hand, whose praise and pride,  
Were still mine old Adriatic's, mother and wife  
And wellspring of mine honour, that I love  
Not her nor heaven nor Venice more than thee  
Whose laughter mocks us and whose lip maligns ;  
Nay, not so much, thou knowest, were I not old  
Or thou not young, I would not fear to say,  
As now, lest youth reprove mine age of love  
And shame chastise it for infirmity,  
And thou—but in thine heart, I think, there lurks  
No thought that should reprove it or chastise  
With less than tender laughter ; though, being old,

The sea be meeter for my bride, and show  
A wrinkled face with hoary fell that seems  
More like mine own than thou canst show me.

DUCHESS.

How

Man's courtesy keeps time with falsehood, though  
Truth ring rebuke unheeded ! Look, my lord,  
How the sea bids the sun and us good night,  
With what sweet sighs and laughter, light and wind  
Contending as they kiss her, till the sigh  
Laugh on her lip, and all her sunward smile  
Subside in sighing to shoreward : will you say  
God hath not given you there a goodlier bride  
Than his who mates with woman ?

FALIERO.

She is fair—

Heaven, in our dreams of heaven, not fairer ; nay,  
The heaven that lends her colour not so fair,  
Being less in men's eyes living : but in thee,  
Were even thy face no fairer found than hers,  
There sleeps no chance of shipwreck. See, they come,  
The hunters with their trophies, and in front,  
If the sun play not with an old man's eyes,  
My boy it is that leads them.

DUCHESS.

And unhurt.

[ *Voices below* : Long live Faliero ! live Bertuccio long !

DUCHESS.

God and St. Mark be praised for all !

FALIERO.

Nay, child,  
Wouldst thou make him a child or girl, to thank  
God that he bears him like a man and takes  
No hurt for lack of skill or manfulness  
In young men's craft or pastime? Welcome, sirs ;  
Well done, and welcome. Hither, son, to me.

*Enter BERTUCCIO and Hunters.*

Give this good lady thanks, who hath at heart  
Such care of thee she might not choose but doubt  
If manhood were enough in heart of thine  
Or strength in hand for sportful service.

DUCHESS.

Nay ;

I said so never.

BERTUCCIO.

Sir, my thanks to both.  
We have seen good sport ; but these my friends, who lay  
The hunt's main honour on my single hand,  
Malign themselves to praise me.

FALIERO.

Yet for that  
Thy cheek need put not on the dye wherewith  
The sunset's flag now hoisted strikes twice red  
These westward palace-columns. Come : the dance

Will try thy mettle till the first bell sound  
And bid the banquet in. A fairer night  
Spring could not send us. Come beside me : so.

[*Exeunt.*

SCENE II.—*The Piazzetta.*

*Enter* STENO *and* LIONI.

STENO.

I will not and I shall not be revenged?  
It cannot be? Thou sayest it?

LIONI.

This I say,

Thou shalt do well to get thee home and sleep.

STENO.

Sleep? and forgive? and pray, before I sleep,  
God love and bless and comfort and sustain  
With all the grace that consecrates old age  
Faliero? Is my badge a hare—a dove—  
A weasel—anything whose heart or gall  
Is water, or is nothing? God shall first  
Give up his place to Satan—heaven fall down  
Below the lowest and loathliest gulf in hell—  
Ere I take on me such dishonour.

LIONI.

## Shame



Thou hast laid upon thyself already, nor  
Canst hurl it off with howling : words can wash  
No part of ignominy away that clings  
As yet about thee : time and sufferance may,  
And penitence, if manful. I would fain  
Think thee, being noble, not ignoble ; as  
Must all men think the man born prince or churl  
Whom wrath or lust or rancorous self-regard  
Drives past regard of honour.

STENO.

Look you, friend :  
What, think you, shall these all men think, who read  
Writ up to-morrow on the ducal seat,  
The throne of office, this for epigraph—  
‘Marin Faliero of the fair-faced wife :  
He keeps and others kiss her’—eh? or thus—  
‘Others enjoy her and he maintains her’—ha?

LIONI.

Thou art not such a hound at heart : thy tongue  
Is viler than thy purpose.

STENO.

Wilt thou swear  
This? Vile—why, vile were he that should endure  
Insult ; not he that being offended dares  
Take insolence by the beard—be it white or black—  
And shake and spit upon it. Ay? by God!  
Back turned and shoulder shrugged confute not me :



Abide awhile : be dawn my witness : wait,  
And men shall find what heart is mine to strike,  
What wit to wound mine enemy : meet me then,  
And say which fool to-night spake wiselier here.

*[Exeunt severally.]*

## ACT II.

SCENE I.—*An apartment in the ducal palace.*

MARINO FALIERO and the DUCHESS.

FALIERO.

It does not please thee, then, if silence have  
Speech, and if thine speak true, to hear me praise  
Bertuccio? Has my boy deserved of thee  
Ill? or what ails thee when I praise him?

DUCHESS.

Sir,

How should it hurt me that you praise—

FALIERO.

My son,

Mine, more than once my brother's : how, indeed?

DUCHESS.

Have I the keeping of your loves in charge  
To unseal or seal their utterance up, my lord?

FALIERO.

Again, thy lord ! I am lord of all save thee.

DUCHESS.

You are sire of all this people.

FALIERO.

Nay, by Christ,

A bitter brood were mine then, and thyself  
Mismated worse than April were with snow  
Or January with harvest, being his bride  
Who bore so dire a charge of fatherhood.  
Thou, stepmother of Venice ? and this hand,  
That could not curb nor guide against its will  
A foot that fell but heavier than a dove's,  
What power were in it to hold obedience fast,  
Laid on the necks of lions ?

DUCHESS.

Why, men say

The lion will stoop not save to ladies' hands,  
But such as mine may lead him.

FALIERO.

Thine ? I think

The very wolf would kiss and rend it not.

DUCHESS.

The very sea-wolf ?

FALIERO.

Verily, so meseems.

DUCHESS.

For so the strong sea-lion of Venice doth.

FALIERO.

This is a perilous beast whereof thou sayest  
So sweet a thing so far from like to be—  
A horrible and a fiend-faced shape, men call  
The lion of the waters.

DUCHESS.

But St. Mark  
Holds his in leash of love more fast, my lord,  
Than ever violence may.

FALIERO.

By heaven and him,  
Thy sweet wit's flight is even too fleet for me :  
No marvel though thy gentle scorn smite sore  
On weaker wits of younglings : yet I would,  
Being more my child than even my wife to me,  
Thine heart were more a sister's toward my son.

DUCHESS.

So is it indeed—and shall be so—and more,  
The more we love our father and our lord,  
Shall our two loves grow full, grow fire that springs  
To Godward from the sacrifice it leaves  
Consumed for man's burnt-offering.

FALIERO.

What ! thine eyes

Are very jewels of even such fire indeed.  
I thought not so to kindle them : but yet  
My heart grows great in gladness given of thine  
Whose truth in such bright silence as is God's  
Speaks love aloud and lies not.

DUCHESS.

No, my lord.

FALIERO.

It is not truth nor love then, sweet my child,  
That lightens from thine eyeshot ?

DUCHESS.

Yea, my lord.

FALIERO.

I grow less fond than foolish, troubling thee,  
Who yet am held or yet would hold myself  
Not yet unmanned with dotage. Sooth is this,  
I am lighter than my daily mood today  
And heedless haply lest I wrong mine age  
And weary thine with words unworthy thee  
Or him that would be honoured of the world  
Less than beloved—with love not all unmeet—  
Of one or twain he loves as old men may.  
Bertuccio loves me ; thou dost hate me not  
That like a frost I touch thy flower, and breathe  
As March breathes back the spirit of winter dead  
On May that dwells where thou dost : but my son  
Finds no more grace of thee to comfort him  
Than April wins of the east wind. Wot thou well,

The long loose tongues of Tuscan wit would cast  
Ill comment on this care of mine to bring  
More close my wife's heart and my son's, being young,  
And I a waif of winter, left astrand  
Above the soft sea's tidemark whose warm lip  
Is love's, that loves not age's : but I think  
We are none of those whose folly, set in shame,  
Makes mirth for John of Florence.

DUCHESS.

By God's grace,

No.

FALIERO.

And by grace of pure Venetian pride  
And blood of blameless mothers. By St. Mark,  
Shame, that stings sharpest of the worms in hell,  
Seems, if those light-souled folks sing true, to them  
No more a burning poison than the fly's  
We brush from us, and know not : but for men  
The eternal fire hath no such fang to smite  
As this their jests make nought of. Life is brief—  
Albeit thou knowest not, nor canst well believe,  
But life is long and lovesome as thine age  
In vision sees it, and in heart uplift  
Plays prelude clear of presage—brief and void  
Where laughing lusts fulfil its length of days  
And nought save pleasure born seems worth desire ;  
But long and full of fruit in all men's sight  
Whereon the wild worm feeds not, nor the sun  
Strikes, nor the wind makes war, nor frost lays hold,  
Is the ageless life of honour, won and worn

With heart and hand most equal, and to time  
Given as a pledge that something born of time  
Is mightier found than death, and wears of right  
God's name of everlasting.

DUCHESS.

Child I am,  
Or child my lord will call me, yet himself  
Knows this not better, holds no truer this truth,  
Nor keeps more fast his faith in it than I.

FALIERO.

No need thy tongue should witness with thine eyes  
How thine heart beats toward honour. Blind were he,  
And mad with base brainsickness even to death,  
Who seeing thee should not see it. Those Florentines  
With names more gracious than their customs crown  
Glad heads of graceless women ; jewelled names  
That mock the bright stone's fire of constant heart,  
Diamante, Gemma ; thine, were thine as these,  
Might dare the vaunt unchallenged : such a name  
Is in those eyes writ clear with fire more keen  
Than ever shame bade shine or sin made burn  
Where grace lay dead ere death. How now, my son?

*Enter* BERTUCCIO.

BERTUCCIO.

Most noble uncle—

FALIERO.

Nay, but art thou mazed?



No reverence toward our lady, nor a look  
Save as of one distraught with fear, whose dreams  
Are still as fire before his eyes by night  
That leaves them dark by daytime? Yestereve,  
Hadst thou so looked upon the bull, by Christ,  
Thou hadst come not home his conqueror.

DUCHESS.

Sir, perchance  
Your nephew with your grace would speak alone.

BERTUCCIO.

Ay, madam.

FALIERO.

Nay, sir. Why, what coil is this?  
Thine eyes look scarce half drunken, but thy speech  
Is thicker than with wine.

DUCHESS.

Good day, my lords.

FALIERO.

Pass out of earshot if thou list, but pass  
—I pray thee, sweet!—no further.

[*Duchess withdraws.*]

Now, my son,  
If nought bemuse thy brain or bind thy tongue,  
Speak.

BERTUCCIO.

Sire, I may not.



FALIERO.

God consume thee ! nay,  
But bring thy wits back healed—what dost thou then  
Here ?

BERTUCCIO.

What must needs, in my despite and thine,  
Be done, and yet should be not. None but I  
Dare tell my sire that Venice rings and roars  
Aloud with monstrous mockery whence our name  
Is rent as carrion by the vulturous beaks  
That feed on fame and soil it. Sir, it were  
A shame beyond all treason for my lips  
To take this taint upon them : read, and see  
What all have seen that in thine hall of state  
Since dawn have entered, on thy sovereign seat  
Nailed up in God's defiance and ours, a lie  
That hell would hear not unrebuked, nor heaven  
Endure and find no thunder.

[*Gives a paper to Faliero.*]

FALIERO.

God us aid !  
Why, if the pageant match thy prologue, man,  
The stage should shake to bear it.—Body of God !  
What ?

DUCHESS.

Sir ! my lord !

BERTUCCIO.

Forbear him.

FALIERO.

Does the sun  
Shine?—Did he smite me on the face?

DUCHESS.

Who?

FALIERO.

He.

[*Pointing to Bertuccio.*]

DUCHESS.

What have you given him?

BERTUCCIO.

Ask not.

FALIERO.

Let me think—  
Art not thou too Faliero, and my son?

BERTUCCIO.

Ay.

FALIERO.

By the glory of God in heaven, I swear,  
I think not as I thought it.

BERTUCCIO.

Then your thought  
Errs, and the mind whose passion brings it forth  
Strays far, and shakes toward ruin.

FALIERO.

It may be so,  
Sir ; it may be so.

DUCHESS.

Heaven have pity on all !

FALIERO.

Madam, what man is this that speaks to me ?

DUCHESS.

My lord your nephew.

FALIERO.

Thine ? thy lord is this ?

Thy man ? thy master ?

BERTUCCIO.

Sir, bethink you—

FALIERO.

Ay—

I will bethink me surely. Fair my wife,  
I pray you pardon mine unreverend age,  
Shamed as it stands before you—spurned, and made  
A thing for boys to spit at. In my sight,  
I pray you, do not smile too broad at it.  
White hairs, if he that bears them bear my place,  
Are held, I know, unvenerable of all.  
Fair sir, you are young, and men may honour you :  
Tell me, whom am blind, how I should bear myself  
In the eyes of men who see me that I see  
Nothing.

DUCHESS.

O God, be pitiful !

BERTUCCIO.

My lord,  
Refrain yourself ; you stagger toward the pit  
Whose gulf is madness ; gather up your heart ;  
Give not all rein to rage.

FALIERO.

I will not, sir.  
There was a noise of hissing in mine ears ;  
I could not hear you for it ; and in mine eyes  
Blank night, and fire, and blindness. Now I see  
The leprous beggar whom the town spits out  
Hath more than I of honour. Many a year  
I have dreamed of many a deed that brought not shame,  
Not shame at all, but praise : these were not mine,  
I know them now, they were not : mine have earned  
For the utmost crown and close of all my life  
Shame. I would know, were God not stricken dumb,  
What deed I have done that this should fall on me.

BERTUCCIO.

My lord—

FALIERO.

Thy servant's servant, and a dog.  
Yet art thou, too, vile ; nay, not vile as I,  
But baser than a beaten bondman.

BERTUCCIO.

Sir,  
If madness make you not a thrall indeed,

But reverence yet claim reverence, take some thought  
Not for yourself, nor me.

FALIERO.

Dost thou desire  
So much for her sake of me? Son of mine,  
Look well upon thy father: let mine eyes  
Take all the witness of the spirit in thine,  
That I may know what heart thou hast indeed.  
Bertuccio, if thine eyes lie, then is God  
Dead, and the world hell's refuse.

BERTUCCIO.

Sire and lord,

If ever I have lied to you, I lie  
Now.

FALIERO.

I believe thou liest not. Mark me, son,  
This is no little trust I put in thee,  
Believing yet, in face of this I read,  
That man or God may lie not.

BERTUCCIO.

Speak to her.

FALIERO.

Take comfort, child: this world is foul, God wot,  
That gives thee need of comfort.

DUCHESS.

I have none—

No need, I mean—if nought fare ill with you.

FALIERO.

Much, much there is fares ill with all men : yet,  
With thee, if righteousness were loved in heaven,  
Should nought at all fare ill for ever. Sweet,  
As thou wouldst fain, if thou couldst ever sin,  
Find for that sin forgiveness, pardon me.  
I am great in years, and what I had borne in youth,  
Not well perchance, yet better, now, being old,  
I cannot bear, thou seest, at all. For this  
Forgive me : not with will of mine it was  
That thus I scared so sore thy harmless heart.  
Speak to me not now : ere this hour be full,  
It may be we may speak awhile again  
Together : now must none abide with me. [*Exit.*

DUCHESS.

What have they said ?

BERTUCCIO.

Ask never that of man.

DUCHESS.

What have they said of me ?

BERTUCCIO.

I cannot say.

DUCHESS.

Thou wilt not—being mine enemy. Why, for shame  
You should not, sir, keep silence.

BERTUCCIO.

Yet I will.

DUCHESS.

I never dreamt so dark a dream as this.

BERTUCCIO.

God send it no worse waking.

DUCHESS.

Now I know

You are even indeed her enemy, who believed  
She had never so deserved of you. I have  
No friend where friends I thought were mine, and find,  
Where never I thought to find them, enemies. Whence  
Have I deserved by chance of any man  
That he should be mine enemy?

BERTUCCIO.

If I be,

I would not strike you shamefully at heart,  
But rather bear a bitterer blame than this  
Than right myself with doing you wrong. Would God  
Your enemies and mine uncle's all were I !

DUCHESS.

Do you know them—these—what manner of men  
they are ?

BERTUCCIO.

Save as I know that hell breeds worms and fire,  
No.



DUCHESS.

Have I merited these? Have we that loved,  
Have we that love, in God's clear sight or man's,  
Sinned?

BERTUCCIO.

Nay, not thou, if heaven by love for earth  
Sins not : if thou, then God in loving man  
Sins.

DUCHESS.

Nay : for yet you never kissed my lips.  
That day the truth sprang forth of thine, I swore  
It should not bring my soul and thine to shame.  
And thou too, didst not thou, for very love,  
Swear it?

BERTUCCIO.

And stands mine oath not whole?

DUCHESS.

Give God

Honour, who hath kept in us our honour fast.  
Whatever come between our death and this,  
For that I thank him.

BERTUCCIO.

Ah, my love, my light,  
Soul of my soul, and holier heart of mine,  
Thee, thee I thank, that yet I live, and yet  
Love, and yet stand not in all true men's eyes  
Shamed. Am I pure as thou, that save through thee  
I should be found no viler than I am?

Hadst thou been other, I perchance, God knows,  
Had been a baser thing than galls us now.

DUCHESS.

Ay ! but I knew it or ever I wrung it forth—  
Me then they smite at, and my lord in me,  
Who have smitten him so sorely ?

BERTUCCIO.

Dear, how else ?

When seemed our sire a furious weakling, made  
For any wind to work upon and wrest  
Awry with passion that had struck no root  
Deep even as love or honour ?

DUCHESS.

Woe is me !

Would God I were not !

*Re-enter FALIERO.*

FALIERO.

Pray thou no such prayer :

I heard that cry to Godward : call it back.  
My faultless child, if prayer seem good to thee,  
Pray : but for nought like death. And doubt thou  
not

But yet thou hast given me daily more good things  
Than God can give of evil ; nor may man,  
Albeit his fang be deadlier than the snake's  
And strike too deep for God or thee to heal,  
Undo the good thou didst, or make a curse

Grow where thou sowedst a blessing. Go in peace ;  
And take with thee love's full thanksgiving. Go.

DUCHESS.

My father, and my lord !

FALIERO.

My child and wife,  
Go. *[Exit Duchess.]*

Now to thee, son. When thou gavest me this,  
I do not ask thee if thou knewest the man.  
It were impossible, out of reach of thought,  
That mine own brother's and mine own heart's child  
Should give it me, and say—I know the man ;  
He lives : I did not take him by the throat  
And make the lying soul leap through his lips  
Before I told thee such a thing could live.

BERTUCCIO.

You do me right : I know not.

FALIERO.

This remains,  
That we should know : being known, to thee nor me  
Belongs the doomsman's labour of the lash  
That is to scourge him out of life. My son,  
I charge thee by thine honour and my love  
Thou lay no hand upon him.

BERTUCCIO.

Nay—  
Nay, my lord,

FALIERO.

Swear me this.

BERTUCCIO.

I will not.

FALIERO.

Swear, I say.

BERTUCCIO.

I cannot swear it, father.

FALIERO.

By Christ's blood,  
But swear thou shalt, and keep it. Do not make  
Thy sire indeed mad with more monstrous wrong  
Than yet bows down his head dishonoured. Swear.

BERTUCCIO.

What?

FALIERO.

That albeit his life lay in thine hand  
Thou wouldst not bruise it with a finger.

BERTUCCIO.

Sir,

How can I?

FALIERO.

Sir, by God, thou shalt not choose.  
Art thou the hangman?

BERTUCCIO.

Be noble?                      If the knave perchance

FALIERO.

Dost thou mock thyself and me?  
Noble?

BERTUCCIO.

My lord, I would not wrong the worst  
Of all that wrong the names they wear : but yet  
I cannot see in Venice one save one  
Who might, being born base, and of no base name,  
Conceive himself so far your enemy.

FALIERO.

Boy,  
What knowest thou of their numbers that have cause,  
Being vile, to hate me? Hath my rule not been  
Righteous?

BERTUCCIO.

That stands not questionable of man.

FALIERO.

How then should more not hate than love me? Child,  
Child !

BERTUCCIO.

But a man's wrath strikes more straight, my lord.  
How vile soe'er, than toward a woman. This—  
This is a dog's tooth that has poisoned you :  
And yestereve a dog it was you bade  
Spurn out of sight of honour.

FALIERO.

Steno?

BERTUCCIO.

He.

Else am not I Faliero.

FALIERO.

Then—I say,

Then,—be it so,—what wouldst thou do? Being my  
son,

What wouldst thou dream or do, this being so?

BERTUCCIO.

Why,

With God's good will and yours, and good men's leave,  
Hew out his heart for dogs to gnaw. Might this  
Displease you?

FALIERO.

Why then yet is this to do?

BERTUCCIO.

Forgive me, father, and God forgive me : this  
I am all on fire with shame to have spoken of  
And think the man lives while I prate. But you  
Know, and our Lord God knows, it is but now,  
Now, even this instant breath of imminent time,  
That I have guessed this.

FALIERO.

Ay; we know it well;

We, God and I.

BERTUCCIO.

And both of you give leave—  
Or leave I crave of neither—pardon me,  
But leave I crave not to set heel on him.

FALIERO.

God gives not leave ; and I forbid thee.

BERTUCCIO.

Then,  
In God's teeth and in yours, I will, or God  
Shall smite me helpless by your hand. My lord,  
You do but justice on me, so to seem—  
I would not say, to dwell in doubt of me.  
I should have passed ere this out of your sight,  
Silent.

FALIERO.

Thou shouldst not. Is this burden sore  
That as thou sayest God lays on thee, or I,  
To be as I am patient ?

BERTUCCIO.

Fain would I  
Be, would God help me, even as you—were you  
As I now stand, though shamefaced, in your sight.

FALIERO.

Ay—you are young and shamefaced—I am old,  
And in my heart the shame is. But your face  
Hath honour in it—and what have I to do,  
What should I do with honour ? Thou dost make



Of mine more havoc and less count of me  
Than yet mine enemies have, to take this charge  
Upon the personal quarrel of thine hand,  
Unchartered by commission.

BERTUCCIO.

And of me,  
My lord, of me what make you? How shall men  
Not spit when I pass by, at one that had  
Nor heart nor hand, eye to behold nor ear  
To hear the several scoffs, by glance or speech,  
That base men cast on us? Nay, then what right  
Had I to call any man base that lives  
Or any worm that stings in secret? Sir,  
Put not this shame upon me : when have I  
Deserved it? Why, a beaten dog, a slave  
Branded and whipped by justice, durst not bear  
For very shame's sake, though he know not shame,  
So great dishonour.

FALIERO.

Thou shalt bear it, son.

BERTUCCIO.

I will not.

FALIERO.

Son, what will is this of thine  
To lift its head up when I bid it lie  
And listen while mine own, thy father's will,  
Speaks? How shalt thou that wilt not honour me  
Take in thine hand mine honour? Mine, not thine,

Not yet, I tell thee, thine it is to say  
Thou shalt or shalt not strike or spare the stroke  
That is to make my fame, if hurt it be,  
Whole. I, not thou, it is that heads the house  
And bears the burden : I, not thou, meseems,  
It was that fought at Zara. Nay, thine eyes  
Answer, an old man then was young, and I  
That now am young then was not : nor in sooth  
Would I misdoubt or so misprize thee, boy,  
As not to think thou hadst done as gladly well  
As I that service, had it lain in thee,  
Or any toward our country. But myself  
Am not so bowed and bruised of ruinous time,  
Not yet so beaten down of trampling years,  
That I should make my staff or sword of thee,  
And strike by delegation. On the state  
Is laid the charge of right and might to deal  
Justice for all men and myself and thee  
By sovereignty of duty ; not on us  
Lies of that load whereto the law puts hand  
One feather's or one grain's weight. More : did we  
Take so much on us of the general charge,  
We were not loyal : and the dog we strike  
Were yet, though viler than a leper's hound,  
No viler then than we, who by God's gift  
Being born of this the crown of commonweals,  
Venetian, so should cast our crown away  
That men born subject, unashamed to be  
Called of their king subjects, might scoff at us  
As children of no loftier state than theirs.

For where a man's will hangs above men's heads  
Sheer as a sword or scourge might, and not one  
Save by his grace hath grace to call himself  
Man—there, if haply one be born a man,  
Needs must he break the dogleash of the law  
To do himself, being wronged, where no right is,  
Right : but as base as he that should not break,  
To show himself no dog, but man, their law,  
Were he, that civic thief, the trustless knave  
Who should not, being as we born masterless,  
Put faith in freedom and the free man's law,  
Justice, but like a king's man born, compelled  
To cower with hounds or strike with rebels, rise  
And right himself by wrong of all men else,  
Shaming his country ; saying, ' I trust thee not ;  
I dare not leave my cause upon thine hand,  
Mine honour in thy keeping lies not sure ;  
I must not set the chance of my good name  
On such a dicer's cast as this, that thou  
Wilt haply, should it like thee, do me right.'  
No citizen were this man, nor unmeet  
By right of birth and civic honour he  
To call a man sovereign and lord : nor here  
Lives one, I think, so vile a fool as this.  
For me, my faith is in the state I serve  
And those my fellow-servants, in whose hands  
Rests now mine honour safe as theirs in mine.  
Which trust should they redeem not, but give up  
In mine their own fame forfeit, this were not  
Venice.

BERTUCCIO.

But if perchance the thing fall out?  
If some be peradventure less than thou  
Venetian, equal-souled and just of eye,  
Must our own hands not take our own right up?  
If these abuse their honour, and forbear,  
For love's or fear's sake, justice?

FALIERO.

If the sun  
Leap out of heaven down on the Lido there  
And quench him in Giudecca. [Rises.

BERTUCCIO.

Sir, but then —

FALIERO.

I charge thee, speak thereof to me no more. [Exeunt.

SCENE II. *The Piazzetta.*

*Enter STENO, meeting LIONI and BELTRAMO.*

STENO.

What says our Lioni now? hath he not heard  
Nor seen if we lack heart or wit to strike?  
Eh! what saith wisdom?

LIONI.

What indeed to thee

That art a knave and liar, a coward and fool?  
Nothing.

STENO.

God's blood, sir !

LIONI.

For thy veins have none :  
A beggar's trull breeds nobler brats than thee.  
I bid thee, ser Michele, know me not.

STENO.

Well—but I bear such jests not every day ;  
Thou knowest me that I do not.

LIONI.

Hound, be hence ;  
And let a man draw breath unplagued of thine.

STENO.

Art thou my nobler ?

LIONI.

Fool, the beasts are that.  
Wilt thou not leave this air taintless of thee ?  
Wouldst thou be whipped—save of the hangman ?

STENO.

What !

LIONI.

Strike him, Beltramo.

BELTRAMO.

Sir, by Christ, not I :  
I am not of that office.

STENO.

No, thou knave.  
Thine hand against a noble !

BELTRAMO.

Not mine hand,  
Surely ; but say my foot should strike a liar,  
The blow should do his dogship honour : yea,  
Were all high titles gilt about his head,  
Scarce were he worthy to be spurned of me.

STENO.

Dost thou not hear then, Lioni, how thy knave  
Dishonours thee, doing me dishonour ?

LIONI.

Man,  
—All true men pardon one that calls thee so !—  
Leave us, or I will do my face the shame  
And thine the great and yet unmerited grace  
To spit upon thee.

STENO.

Christ ! the men are mad.  
Well, yet, God save and keep you !

LIONI.

Ay, from thee.  
[*Exit Steno.*]

BELTRAMO.

I would the Doge bore such mind as yours.

LIONI.

Thou knowest he bears a nobler.

BELTRAMO.

This I know,

His blood is more intemperate than the sea  
When red Libeccio takes it : half a sting  
Will ravage all the channels of its course  
With fever's furious poison : and this worm  
Hath shot the sting into his heart.

LIONI.

Can I

Help him ? or thou, friend, heal it ?

BELTRAMO.

No, my lord.

Would God—

LIONI.

And what wouldst thou with God ?

BELTRAMO.

Alack,

What no man born, I doubt, may get of God  
Whom he hath bidden in all this age of ours  
Be born as I am.

LIONI.

And how wouldst thou be born ?

BELTRAMO.

Even thine and all men's equal.



LIONI.

Ay, good friend?

Why, now you thou me ; being a noble too,  
What could my malcontent do more?

BELTRAMO.

My lord,

I trust and think, being noble as you, I were not  
Less malcontent than now, being but by blood  
Your footboy's fellow-citizen and yours.

LIONI.

Ay? Well, a brave man, were he seven times king,  
Is but a brave man's peer : so be it : but God  
Unmake me that I am and make me vile  
If I conceive, were I and thou, man, mates,  
What then should discontent thee.

BELTRAMO.

Why, to you

The slight thing then still fretting half my heart,  
The secret small snake-headed thing, should seem  
Nothing ; yet me not all alone it frets,  
Galls no more mine than many a man's heart else,  
That any man should bear of any man  
Wrong, or that right should hold not equal rule  
On one as on another.

LIONI.

Doth it not

Here?



BELTRAMO.

No, my lord : nor elsewhere on earth.

LIONI.

Why, then, God help thee, why should this forsooth  
Vex thee, or them whose thought keeps tune with thine,  
More than it preys on others ?

BELTRAMO.

Ask of God

That ; some he bids not bear what others may—  
Or haply may not all their patient lives  
With pulseless hearts endure it.

LIONI.

God us aid !

Thy riddles ring no merrier, man, to me  
Than that foul fool's uncleaner japes than thine.  
What gadfly thought hath stung thee ?

BELTRAMO.

Truth, my lord ;

Or call it pity—or call it love of right—  
Malice, or covetousness, or envy—nay,  
But I, howe'er men turn it, call my thought  
Truth.

LIONI.

Be thou ne'er so strong to dive, thou shalt not  
Pluck up from out the shadow where she sleeps  
Truth : and for justice, if she keep not here

Her sovereign state and perfect kingdom, where  
May man take thought and find her? Pity—nay,  
But if our hearts should bleed but one thin tear  
For each wrong known and each we know not of,  
A day would drain them dry of blood. But what  
Hath all our will and all our impotence,  
Though this be strong as that is all too sure,  
To do with him we spake of—be it for hurt  
Or healing? Didst thou call on God to change  
For him the face and fashion of the law  
Whereby the world steers toward some end, and holds  
Some heart up yet of comfort?

BELTRAMO.

Surely, no.

I did but think what good might come of ill  
If this great wrong should smite a heart as great  
With sense of other and older wrongs than this  
Done toward no viler nor more abject hearts  
Nor heaped on heads more worthy shame and scorn  
Than age or place, fame of high deeds, desert,  
Or pride, hath made Faliero's.

LIONI.

By this light,

I think the heat it sheds hath even as wine  
Dazzled thy brain to darkness. How should this  
Do thee or any man good, that thy lord,  
My lord and thine, an old man full of days  
And full of honours, being than all of these  
Himself more honourable, should take by chance

A buffet from a fool's hand on his cheek,  
Or spittle from a fool's mouth on his beard,  
And hardly bear to bear it? Who shall reap  
What harvest hence?

BELTRAMO.

Nor you, sir, know, nor I;  
But haply—so priests lie not—God.

LIONI.

May he  
Bind up thy brain with comfort ere it sweat  
Forth of thy scalp with fever! Mark me, friend,  
Thou dost thyself, being honest, no small wrong  
To let such worms for sloth's sake feed on it.  
I love thee, knowing thee valiant,—yea, by Christ,  
I lie not, saying I love thee—and therein  
If haply I deserve again of thee  
Love, let me rather bid thee than beseech  
Pluck all such thoughts up by the root, and take  
Good counsel rather than intemperate care  
Of what beseems not nor besteads thee. So  
God give thee comfort and good day. Farewell.  
[*Exeunt severally.*]

## ACT III.

SCENE I.—*An apartment in the ducal palace.*

FALIERO and BERTUCCIO.

FALIERO.

Did not I charge thee think no more such thoughts  
Or seal them up in silence? Wouldst thou make  
Honour, that here hath station if on earth,  
Dishonourable? for so to deem or doubt  
Of men set highest in Venice or the world  
Were no less insolent madness than to make  
Thy mother's couch a harlot's. Hast thou seen  
More days than I, that what I think to see  
Thou, thou shouldst hold for questionable? I know  
That God put nought of traitor nor of fool  
In the essence of thy spirit : else—pardon me,  
My brother ! I might hold this child of thine  
Less than should be thy children.

BERTUCCIO.

That, my lord,

I would not be—God spare me that ; I think  
That unrebuked your brother's son may say  
Nor foe nor friend hath yet so found him.

FALIERO.

No ;

I have known thee honourable all thy brief life through  
As they that founded us our house, and sure  
As mine own sword here to my hand is : hence  
It is that harshlier I rebuke thee not,  
Misprizing thus thy lordliest elders. Well—  
Meseems the message tarries that should bring  
Their sovereign sentence to us : the cause, I thought  
Should need nor bear a long debate : but just  
It is that justice should not mix with rage  
Her purity of patience : let them weigh  
My worth against my wrong ere judgment speak,  
And both against the wrongdoer : I were found  
Even all too much a soldier, and my state  
For me no fitter than for thee, should wrath  
Distract my trust and reverence toward the law  
And toward their hands that wield it : as indeed  
It doth not—nay, it could not though I would  
And though it could I would not give it leave

*Enter an Officer.*

OFFICER.

Health from the senate to the Doge I bring,  
And this their sentence.

FALIERO.

Give me this in brief.

Ay—thou, Bertuccio.

BERTUCCIO.

Bid this man begone.

FALIERO.

Why? Hast thou read already?

BERTUCCIO.

Sir, by heaven

I pray you bid him go.

FALIERO.

Ay?—Leave us, friend.

*[Exit Officer.]*

Now; man, what is it?—I would not call thee boy,  
Fluttering and faltering with so changed a cheek  
Above thy task—but read.

BERTUCCIO.

I dare not.

FALIERO.

Ay?

BERTUCCIO.

I dare not, and I will not.

FALIERO.

Dost thou dare

Be called a coward?

BERTUCCIO.

Ay. No. I cannot tell.  
Mine eyes were troubled, or my brain is touched.

FALIERO.

By Christ, I think so. Give it me.

BERTUCCIO.

I cannot. My lord,

FALIERO.

Cannot—will not—dare not? Hark,  
Boy ; though thou find me patient, be not thou  
Frontless, and light as riotous insolence.  
Read.

BERTUCCIO.

Sir, you bade me give it in brief.

FALIERO.

By God,  
I think the boy makes mirth of it. Read, or speak.

BERTUCCIO.

Michele Steno stands condemned—

FALIERO.

To death?  
Exile? God smite thee !

BERTUCCIO.

Had he struck me dumb,



It scarce were harder for my tongue to say  
No.

FALIERO.

Ah ! perpetual prison ?

BERTUCCIO.

If two months,  
 With one year's after exile from the state,  
 Be held so much in Venice.

FALIERO.

Or two days—  
Why not two hours? Thou liest?

BERTUCCIO.

I did not think

To hear that question ever, and reply,  
Would God I did.

FALIERO.

Thou didst not think? Who heeds  
What thoughts were thine? I think this is not night  
Wherein I walk through such a monstrous dream.

BERTUCCIO.

Day be it or night or twilight, sire of mine,  
Two months it is that by these grave men's doom  
On whose high-hearted honour hangs our own  
The dog must lie in durance.



FALIERO.

Son, I think

Thou liest not, but for shame's most piteous sake  
Wilt lay but half the truth upon thy tongue.  
On : when the date is out, the man released  
Shall take my seat, and I the foulest knave's  
That bleeds and swelters in the galleys. Nay,  
Spare me not this : read.

BERTUCCIO.

Father, not for heaven,

God knows, though heaven stood open, would I dare  
Let one reproachful shadow of casual thought  
Fall toward you—but would God you had given my  
hand  
Freedom, or I not asked it ! Mine, my fault  
It is that shame besets us—cursed was I  
To leave brute chance and men's malignities  
Occasion so to smite our honour. Now  
Two months must drain themselves away to death  
Before the tongue be plucked out of his throat.

FALIERO.

Nor now nor then nor ever now need that  
Be. My good son, I give thee kindly thanks  
—And noble thankfulness thou art worthy of—  
That thy forbearance more than my desert  
Withholds thy tongue from revel in rebuke,  
Thy lip from smiles, thine eye from triumph ; this

Would no man else, I doubt, forbear save thee,  
Being wise and young, seeing one so grey in years  
So witless and so vain of spirit and weak,  
So confident and very a fool as now  
The man men called Faliero. Thou alone,  
Thou, only thou in Venice, wouldst, I think,  
So spare and so forbear me. God requite  
Thy reverence and thy gentleness of heart  
Not as he now requites my pride and faith,  
My faith and trust in others.

BERTUCCIO.

Father ! O,  
Would God I had wronged them as they wrong thee  
now  
And stood before them shamed and abject !

FALIERO.

Peace.

Here is no matter more for words or tears  
Bring me my wife—thy sister—hither.

[*Exit Bertuccio.*

Ay

Fourscore full years—and this the crown of them?  
And this the seal set on mine honours? Why,  
Had I deserved this,—were it possible  
That man could ever have merited of the state  
This, and that such a man, being born, could be  
I,—this were yet unpardonable and vile  
In them to deal such justice.

*Re-enter BERTUCCIO with the DUCHESS.*

Now, my child,

How fares it with thee ?

DUCHESS.

Peace be with my lord !

FALIERO.

Heaven be with hell, say : for so far apart  
Peace and thy lord stand each from other. Thou—  
With thee how fares it ?

DUCHESS.

Ill because of thee ;  
Well for mine own part.

FALIERO.

Verily so I think ;  
Ill fares it with thee for an old man's sake,  
By the old man's fault, who by thyself shouldst fare  
Well.

DUCHESS.

Sir, you know me, whether such a thought  
Touched ever with unnatural thanklessness  
And tainted so my spirit.

FALIERO.

Unnatural ? No :  
For thanklessness was never unnatural yet.  
But thou, what thanks, my daughter, owest thou me

Who have made thee not my daughter? Had I given  
Thine hand for love's sake, ay, for love's, away,  
Then thankless wouldst thou be to thank me not.  
Now—

DUCHESS.

Dear and gracious ever have you been  
Toward all found worthy grace and goodness : me  
You have crowned and clothed with honour, being  
your wife :  
And toward your country—

FALIERO.

Good : forget not her.

DUCHESS.

Toward this most glorious country given of God  
For man's elect, his chosen of men, to serve,  
No son more glorious hath done service.

FALIERO.

—Found

More acceptable or worthier this reward.  
Nay, stint not so thy speech : make on : thou sayest  
None hath deserved—what guerdon?—more than I.

DUCHESS.

My lord, was this then wrought for recompense?  
For guerdon is it we serve our country? This  
Meseemed her highest reward of service done,  
The grace to serve her.

FALIERO.

God's best grace and hers  
For fourscore years I have held it : now I hold  
A harlot's kiss, a hangman's wage, more high,  
More precious gains and worthier good men's care,  
Than grace to serve my country.

DUCHESS.

Dear my lord,  
And wherefore ? not through wrath and hate of me,  
Which might so much distemper and disease  
The raging blood and brain of violent men  
Fast bound with iron bands of honour and law  
To women less than woman, that the world  
Might seem to them for shame's sake blackness, day  
Night, and faith dust, and love's face monstrous : yet  
Should this not leave them dead in trust of heart  
Toward motherhood and manhood, as are they  
Whose hearts cast off their country : were I vile,  
My shame could shame not Venice : but your heart,  
Being clear of doubt as mine of shame, can hold  
No thought more worthy than a poisonous dream  
That so should feed its fever. If I be not  
Vile, but in God's and man's eyes and in yours  
Clean as my mother bare me clean of sin  
Such as makes women shameful—then, though earth  
Were full of tongues that cried on me, what hurt  
Were this to you or God in heaven or me  
If we no more than God permit the snake  
To hurt the heel he hisses at, but shoots

No sting through flesh untainted? Were the world  
Full of base eyes and tongues, ears quick to catch  
Evil, and lips more swift to speed it, how  
Should this make vile what were not? You it is,  
My lord it is who wrongs me, to require  
Revenge for that which if it need revenge  
None ever can wash out: but if it need  
None, being an emptier thing than air, the wrong  
Were done of him that held it worth revenge.

FALIERO.

Thou art high of heart, my child—as children may  
Be, and men may not.

DUCHESS.

Sir, but may not men  
Learn if they list of children? Not of me  
Would I desire you, but of Christ, to learn  
Forbearance.

FALIERO.

Christ was no man's lord on earth,  
No woman's husband.

DUCHESS.

God in flesh was he.

FALIERO.

Yea; and not I.

DUCHESS.

Nay, but his servant.

FALIERO.

Yea.

Venetian born, Christian baptized, and duke  
Crowned : and a man grown grey in toil of arms ;  
And profitable in service ; and a slave  
Whom all he served may spit on. That were nought.  
On thee for my sake may they.

DUCHESS.

No, my lord :

On some base thing they call me, which is not  
I.

FALIERO.

Girl, who put so great a heart in thee ?

DUCHESS.

The man who hath shown me honour all my life.  
Faliero.

FALIERO.

None of him shall learn it more.

DUCHESS.

Sir, all men shall that ever hear of him  
So noble, and nobler therefore than were he  
Who had held it needful on so vile a wrong  
To set some seal of honour by revenge.

FALIERO.

Of me thou sayest not this. I am not the man.



DUCHESS.

If God give ear to prayer, thou shalt be.

FALIERO.

Ay—

If that which is not be, and that which is  
Be not, I shall be : this I doubt not of.

DUCHESS.

My lord, am I then other, or yourself,  
Because of tongues that if they smote a serf  
Would seem not worth our heeding ?

FALIERO.

No, and ay.

The serf should heed not, nor for his sake we.  
But—Child, it may be this has made me mad.  
All day remembrance rides me, and by night  
Bestrides and jades my brain, as though some bell  
Rang right above my head violently struck  
With pealing pulse of hammers : and in sleep  
Some shame I know not seems to close me round  
Cloudlike, and fasten on me like a fire,  
And clothe me like a garment ; and it seems  
Though God were good as thou, righteous and kind,  
He could not help me, heal my hurt, undo  
This evil men have done me, till myself  
Know and take heart and kill it and be healed.  
I am old, thou seest, I am old. God comfort thee

Who art not as I am, passionate and infirm :  
Me shall he never.

DUCHESS.

Sir, not God nor man  
But only passion bred and fed of pain  
Turns your fair strength to faint infirmity  
By night nor day, with dream nor reason. Is it  
Less praise, less honour, less desirable,  
To be reviled of hissing things whose souls  
Are wingless worms and eyeless, than to have  
Love, thanks, and reverence, of all souls alive  
Worth reverence, thankfulness, or love ? Doth hell  
Give God less praise than heaven, blaspheming him  
With tongues whose praise would hail him fit for hell ?  
Did vile men praise us, we might loathe ourselves  
More than repentance yet bade ever man,  
More than though good men blamed.

FALIERO.

Ay, like enough.

Thou hast a child's cheek and a wise man's tongue.  
'Tis seventy years since I was called a child—  
And wise man was I never. Hark thee, boy :  
Thou art even as I was, loyal : now take note,  
By me take note, and warning : turn thine heart,  
Turn back thy face from honour ; change, and thrive :  
Learn wisdom of a fool : be not abashed,  
Forsaking all thy father taught or I,  
All counsels and all creeds wherewith, being fools,

We filled thee full of folly : one that bears  
Fourscore years' weight of veriest foolishness  
So counsels and so charges thee. Bow down,  
Down lower, if aught be lower, than lies the dust  
That soils men's feet save when they tread on men  
As these our masters now on thee and me  
And on my brother dead, thy father. Take  
All buffets of all heels thou dardest not bite  
As one that thanks his chastener : let thy lip  
Kiss every hand whence with some loathliest lie  
Thy tongue may wrest forth wages : let thy name  
For cowardice ring recorded more of men  
Than ours for faith did ever : come there war,  
Peril, or chance of evil against the state,  
Make thyself wings, take to thee gold, begone,  
Fly : strike no stroke, nor seem but fain to strike ;  
Haste, let the foe not find thee tarrying, run,  
Cover thine head and hide thee : so shalt thou  
Deserve, if man of Venice may deserve,  
Honour.

BERTUCCIO.

My lord and sire !

FALIERO.

Forget those names.

There lives no title or note of fatherhood  
More venerable than sound the shivering bells  
That fringe a jester's cap ; no lordship now  
That shines too sure and high for shame to soil  
On heads less base than Steno's.

BERTUCCIO.

Hear me, sir.

FALIERO.

Who art thou that I should hear thee? Do men hear  
Me? But whate'er thou be thou art more than I;  
Men call not thee the vilest name they can,  
Doge.

BERTUCCIO.

The noblest yet of earth's it were,  
Would he that bears it but be strong in scorn  
Of things less worth his rage than once the foes  
Who found him strong in action.

FALIERO.

Had I wist,  
Who am now not strong, thou seest, save only in  
speech,  
And even in speech time-stricken—had I wist,  
When for this Venice I smote Hungary down  
And of her fourscore thousand gave a tithe  
For crows to rend at Zara—when meseemed  
I fought for men that made our commonweal  
A light in God's eye brighter than the sun,  
That then I fought for Steno—Speak not thou;  
I know thee, what thou wouldst, with leave, forsooth,  
Say: but for these that fence him round I fought;  
For these that brand me shameful for his sake,  
For these that set their seal upon his words,  
For these that find them worth so soft rebuke

As might a sire lay on his long-tongued child  
Who prattles truth untimely—boy, for these  
I fought, and fought for Steno.

*Enter an Attendant.*

ATTENDANT.

Noble sir,  
The admiral of the arsenal desires  
Audience.

FALIERO.

A man requires, thou sayest, of me  
Audience? The world breeds yet, come rain or sun,  
Fools—how should liars and knaves else live, or God  
Be served and worshipped of the world? My lord,  
Admit him.

ATTENDANT.

Sir !

FALIERO.

Thou art not Venetian?

ATTENDANT.

As sure as you chief prince in Venice.

Yea—

FALIERO.

Then,  
Wert thou the lowest that welters out of life  
Down in the Wells till death remember him,  
Thou art master and lord and sovereign over me.

If I may pray thee do me so much grace  
As not to smite me therefore on the cheek,  
I would desire thee give thy fellow lord  
Admittance to your servant. [*Exit Attendant.*

Thou, my boy,  
Go. Whatsoë'er from Venice come to me,  
From Venice, earth, or heaven, can be but now  
Insult ; and thou, being loyal, and a fool—  
Kind, and my brother's issue—fain would I,  
Being foolish too, and kindly, fain I would  
Thou didst not see it. Go thou, my love, with him.  
Peace be with both. [*Exeunt Duchess and Bertuccio.*

*Enter the Admiral of the Arsenal.*

ADMIRAL.

Health to the Doge ! Sir,  
I pray you look but on my face.

FALIERO.

It bleeds.  
Thy brows are sorely bruised. Art thou come here  
For surgery ?

ADMIRAL.

Yea, by furtherance of your grace  
To find my fame a surgeon.

FALIERO.

Fame? what is it?



The word is not Venetian, sir ; it means Honour.

ADMIRAL.

Toward whom then should I turn in trust  
Save toward our highest in honour ?

FALIERO.

Be it enough  
Thou art found a brawler : being a soldier, man,  
Be not a jester too.

ADMIRAL.

By neither name,  
Sir, am I known in Venice. As yourself  
Are honourable and a righteous man in rule,  
I pray you not but charge you do me right.

FALIERO.

Or wilt thou have me pluck the sun from heaven  
And put it in thine hand ? Nay, that were nought ;  
The sun, though save by sight we touch it not  
Nor save in thought come near it, yet in heaven  
By sight and thought we reach and find it there,  
And here by good works done on earth ; but where,  
And by what sign, in Venice or on earth,  
Honour ?

ADMIRAL.

I crave no more than right.

FALIERO.

No more ?



Strange temperance and strange modesty in man  
To crave no more than what, for all we see,  
Not God's almightiness hath power to give—  
Or else our less than righteous God lacks grace,  
And hath not heart to do it. What wrongs are thine?  
At least I have thus much more of grace than God,  
That I will hearken if not help thee.

ADMIRAL.

Sir,

There came but now to the arsenal a man— [*Pauses.*

FALIERO.

And smote another on the face—is this  
Thy wrong? Thou canst not see the shame on mine  
That thou shouldst make thy plaint of this. Look  
here—

Seest thou no sign in flesh and blood that saith  
What hands have buffeted me?

ADMIRAL.

My lord, my lord,

It is not I who am wronged of these your jests,  
But you much more in honour.

FALIERO.

That being nought,

Dead, rotten, if the thing had ever life,  
I am nowise touched at all. But heed not me :  
I had no mind to wrong thee. On.

ADMIRAL.

This man,

Being noble, of the seed of Barbaro,  
Required of service to be done for him  
The masters of the galleys ; I being by  
Made answer for mine officers and thine,  
This could not be : whereon we fell to words ;  
He chid my duteousness in office there  
As toward his place undutiful, and I  
Rebuked his rank for insolence : he thereat  
Spake not again, but smote me with his hand  
Clenched, and the jewel thereon that loaded it  
Hath writ his wrath where each man's eye may read  
That sees mine own yet blind with blood.

FALIERO.

What then ?

ADMIRAL.

Why, this then, if your grace love righteousness  
More than reproach of men for mad misrule—  
Justice.

FALIERO.

Come hither—here, beside me. Look  
Northwestward, by St. Mark's, athwart the light.  
Seest thou that beggar there asprawl and stark  
Who seems to soil the sunshine where he lies ?

ADMIRAL.

Ay, my lord.

FALIERO.

Ask of him to help us both.

ADMIRAL.

My lord, the temper of your angry wit  
Seems wild and harsh to mine.

FALIERO.

Seem all things not  
To wise men wild as madness, harsh as hell  
To men that ever think on heaven? Thou knowest—  
Nay, then, thou knowest not how they deal with me  
Who are lords of ours, who hold us in their hands,  
Who bid us be and be not. This at least  
Thou hast heard—no gondolier but sings it, none  
But laughs at large who listens—this ye know,  
What manner of wrong was done me late, of whom,  
And toward what judgment answerable he stands  
Who doth me, being too weak to right myself,  
Wrong. Answer not: I did not bid thee say  
Thou knowest, for mine own shame's sake, and for  
thine

I would not hear thee swear thou knowest it not.  
Now, even this hour, the sentence comes to me  
Given on my wrongdoer by our lords of law  
Whose number makes up half my fourscore years.  
Man, what had thine been?

ADMIRAL.

What but death?

FALIERO.

Indeed?

Death? Is it possible or believable  
There lives a man that is no kin to me  
Who holds mine honour worth the washing? Friend,  
These men, born high, have doomed this high-born  
man  
To lie secluded two close months in ward  
And walk again forth freely.

ADMIRAL.

Will your grace

Endure it?

FALIERO.

Seest thou not how patiently?  
Have all their forty buffets on this face  
Raised blood enough to blush with?

ADMIRAL.

Good sir duke,

If you be minded verily for revenge,  
These husbands and these sons of harlots, called  
Nobles—these lineal liars whose tongues thrust out  
Lap blood, lick dust, or lisp for lewdness—these  
Whose mirth, whose life, whose honour hath for root  
Adultery—these that laugh not save at shame,  
But turn all shame to laughter—these our lords  
May find a lord who need but lack the will  
To hew them all in pieces.

FALIERO.

Ay, my friend?

ADMIRAL.

Sir, were you mine and theirs who are friends indeed  
With all that groan and yearn, despair for shame,  
Wax mad in hope—with all whose bloody sweat  
Anoints and sleeks and supples and makes fat  
Our lusty lords in Venice—this might be  
Surely.

FALIERO.

But now didst thou rebuke me—yea,  
For mockery chidd'st thou me : what words for this  
Shall I find fit to chide thee ?

ADMIRAL.

Nay, my duke,  
What words or stripes may please you : shame on me  
Can work no further now nor heavier wrong :  
But, holding me herein a liar or mad,  
You give truth's self and your own soul the lie  
If hope or faith or yearning or desire  
Be verily in your soul toward vengeance.

FALIERO.

If

God's will be strong, man's will be weak, and good  
Be not more vile than evil—if hate or love,  
Wrath, shame, or righteousness, be anything,  
Or aught at all be more than nothing, then  
Much more than vengeance I require ; and yet  
Desire beyond all else desirable

Vengeance. If these who have wronged me, being  
wiped out,  
May leave this Venice with their blood washed white,  
Clean, splendid, sweet for sea and sun to kiss  
Till earth adore and heaven applaud her—then  
Shall my desire, till then insatiable,  
Feed full, and sleep for ever.

ADMIRAL.

Sir, do you  
Set but your hand with ours to it, and the work  
Is even half wrought already.

FALIERO.

What are they  
Who have in hand so high a work, and bid  
Mine own take part and lot with theirs therein?

ADMIRAL.

My faith in yours needs not assurance; yet  
Must none unpledged have knowledge of it, or take  
Our lives in keeping: therefore, ere I speak,  
Swear.

FALIERO.

Wiser men should bear thy charge than thou:  
Swear? If thou lack assurance of me, friend,  
What oath of force may give it thee? If by God  
I swear, being one that might, unsworn to God,  
Betray thee, will my treasonous tongue be tied,  
Think'st thou, by fear of God, not fearing shame?



Were oath or word worth half a grain of dust  
If, save for fear of hell and God, I durst,  
Or would, albeit God's tongue should bid me, lie?  
Or if by Venice, shall my faith to her  
Not bind me, being unsworn, to faith with you  
If well ye will toward Venice—and if ill,  
What oath could pledge me to this breach of oath,  
The mere misprision of your treason—me,  
Who stand for Venice here, in all time's sight,  
To Godward and to manward answerable?  
Or by mine honour would you bind me fast  
To abstain from that which could I dream to do  
My soul were with Iscariot's fast in hell  
Now while my body yet should walk the world  
And make the sun ashamed to cast on earth  
The shameful shadow of such a soulless thing  
Spared by sheer scorn of Satan's and of God's,  
Rejected of damnation? He that swears  
Faith toward his fellow bids him note and heed  
That faith is none within him, seeing his word  
Wants worth and weight which if it want indeed  
No heavier oath than ever shook the soul  
With thunder and with terror and with air  
Can add or cast upon it.

ADMIRAL.

On your soul

Then be it, sir.

FALIERO.

Yea, friend: be it on mine and thine.



And now, as I and thou are faithful men,  
Speak.

ADMIRAL.

Sir, albeit as yet conspiracy  
Be shapeless as a shadow, this dark air  
Breeds not beneath our iron heaven of rule  
Clouds charged with less than lightning ; men there  
are  
Whose hate and love toward freedom and toward shame  
Are full as even your own great heart of fire.  
With such if you would commune on this cause,  
Two might I now bid hither ; a seaman tried,  
Filippo Calendaro, swift of hand  
And stout of heart as is his comrade wise  
And keen of spirit and craft in wiles of war,  
Bertuccio Israello : these, by secret word  
Being called to counsel, shall not fail at need  
To give us note whom else to take in trust  
As in this cause auxiliaries.

FALIERO.

Therein

Lord nor lieutenant nor subordinate  
Should any be, but equal all in heart  
And all in station as in action all  
Equal : for if in heart we be not one  
How shall not each loose limb of our design  
Rot, and relax in sunder ? Not allies,  
Auxiliaries nor seconds we require,  
But single-souled sons of one mother born

And brothers one in spirit ; born as Christ  
Of this pure virgin's womb, the commonweal's,  
Whom fools and slaves would fain make false and foul,  
Being bastard-hearted, though true-born : but she  
Knows shame no more than them she knows, whose  
souls

Were shapen as for service of a king,  
Not citizen, but subject. Bid our friends  
Hither : but ere you go, I pray you call  
My nephew to me.

ADMIRAL.

Sir, God give you grace  
To take this cause upon you ; if he give,  
No name that ever grew a star shall burn  
Too high for yours to shine by.

FALIERO.

This perchance  
May and perchance may be not : God's own hand  
Holds fast all issues of our deeds : with him  
The end of all our ends is, but with us  
Our ends are, just or unjust : though our works  
Find righteous or unrighteous judgment, this  
At least is ours, to make them righteous. Go.

[*Exit Admiral.*]

What sentence shall be given on mine ? Of man,  
As ill or well God means me, well or ill  
Shall judgment pass upon me : but of God,  
If God himself be righteous or be God,  
Who being unrighteous were but god of hell,

The sentence given shall judge me just : for these  
Who are part and parcel of my shame and theirs  
Defile not nor disgrace me, whom they spurn  
And smile and spit on, but their country : nay,  
Nor only this, but freedom, duty, right,  
Honour, and all things whence the unlikeness lives  
Of commonwealths and kingdoms ; all whence grows  
The difference found of man whose brow fronts heaven  
And beast whose eye seeks earthward—citizen  
Whose hand implores a grace from no man's hand,  
And thrall whose lip craves pardon if it smile.

*Re-enter* BERTUCCIO.

How farest thou now, boy ? When I bade thee hence,  
It was to spare thee sight and share of shame  
I thought should fall upon me : but I knew  
Thou wouldst have borne therein thy loyal part,  
And eased, if pain of thine or love might ease,  
My sufferance of mine own. Behold me now :  
What seest thou ? rage, or shame, or pride, or fear,  
Or what vile passion else ?

BERTUCCIO.

Dear father, none,  
As never yet man saw nor man shall see  
A sign on that the noblest face alive  
Dishonourable.

FALIERO.

Nor aught untimely ? nought

Strange? For the world is other with me, boy,  
Than when we parted.

BERTUCCIO.

Sir, I dare not say,  
Not though the word seem written on your brow,  
Triumph—nor, though this lighten from your eye,  
Joy.

FALIERO.

Yet, by Christ's own cross, my brother's child,  
Thou shouldst not lie to say so.

BERTUCCIO.

What good hap  
Hath brought them back whence late by men's default  
Such looks, long natural there, were banished?

FALIERO.

Son,

A poor man's wrong and mine and all the world's,  
Diverse and individual, many and one,  
Insufferable of long-suffering less than God's,  
Of all endurance unendurable else,  
Being come to flood and fullness now, the tide  
Is risen in mine as in the sea's own heart  
To tempest and to triumph. Not for nought  
Am I that wild wife's bridegroom—old and hoar,  
Not sapless yet nor soulless. Well she knows,  
And well the wind our brother, whence our sails  
Went swollen and strong toward Istria, that her head  
Might bow down bruised with battle, and yield up

Its crested crown to Venice—well the world  
Knows if this grey-grown head and lank right hand  
Were once unserviceable : and she, my wife,  
The sea it is that sends me comfort, son,  
Strength, and assurance of her sons and mine,  
Thy brethren, here to stablsh right for wrong,  
For treason truth, for thraldom like as ours  
Freedom. But thou, so be it the wind and sun  
That reared thy limbs and lit thy veins with life  
Have blown and shone upon thee not for nought—  
If these have fed and fired thy spirit as mine  
With love, with faith that casts out fear, with joy,  
With trust in truth and pride in trust—if thou  
Be theirs indeed as theirs am I, with me  
Shalt thou take part and with my sea-folk—aye,  
Make thine eyes wide and give God wondering thanks  
That grace like ours is given thee—thou shalt bear  
Part of our praise for ever.

BERTUCCIO.

Praise or blame,  
And ruinous fall or radiant rise, for me  
With you shall be as one thing. I am yours.  
The man I am you made me, and may shape  
The man I shall be.

*Re-enter the Admiral, with CALENDARO and ISRAELLO.*

FALIERO.

Welcome, sirs ; ye find  
A fellow-servant, and your comrade now

In fellowship of wrong, not hopeless yet  
To call you, if your will stretch wing with mine,  
Friends, citizens, and brethren. This our friend  
Hath given you by my charge to know of me  
Thus much, that if your ends and mine be one,  
As one our wrongs are, and this people's need  
One, toward the goal forefelt of our desire  
No heart shall beat, no foot shall press, no hand  
Strain, strive, and strike with steadier will than mine  
And faith more strenuous toward the purpose. This  
If ye believe not, here our hope hath end ;  
If ye believe, here under happier stars  
Begins the date of Venice.

## CALENDARO.

I believe

Not more in God's word than in yours ; and this  
Not for your station's sake, nor yet your fame's,  
How high soe'er the wind of war have blown  
The splendour of your standard : but, my lord,  
Your face and heart and speech, being one, require  
Of any not base-born and servile-souled  
Faith : and my faith I give you.

## ISRAELLO.

Sir, and I,  
Who know as all men know you wise in war,  
Put trust in wisdom tried so long, and found  
So strong for service ever.



FALIERO.

Then, no more  
Hath hope so high as ours is need of words  
To rear it higher or set more steadfast. This  
Remains, that being in purpose strong to strike  
We take but counsel where and how the stroke  
May sharpest fall and surest. Sirs, for me  
In all keen ventures tried of strength and chance  
The briefest rede and boldest hath been best.  
We, that would purge the state of poisoned blood,  
Need now but mark its hour for blood-letting,  
And where to prick the swollen and virulent vein  
That feeds most full this deep distemperature  
Whence half the heart of Venice rots. These men  
That steer the state with violent hand awry—  
These rather that bind fast the steersman's hand,  
Baffle and blind him, while the veering stem  
Reels deathward—they or she must utterly  
Perish : the wind blows higher through this red heaven  
Than when a ship may save herself, yet fling  
Less by the board of all her lading, now  
Found worthless, than may lighten her indeed.  
What think you? may this plague be thoroughly purged,  
And one of these our lords who trample us  
Live? Are ye men that take this burden up,  
And think with half a hand to bear it through  
Or wear it like a feather? If ye will,  
Ye may be free, red-handed from revenge,  
Or keep white hands, be slaves, and slumber : I  
Will serve no more, nor sleep dishonoured.



CALENDARO.

Sir,

For one wrong done you, being but man as we,  
If wrath make lightning of your life, in us,  
For all wrongs done of all our lords alive  
Through all our years of living, doubt you not  
But wrath shall climb as high toward heaven, and hang  
As hot with hope of thunder.

ISRAELLO.

Not to me

Can justice ever seem too just, or steer  
Too straight ahead on vengeance : but we need  
The helmsman's eye to run before his hand,  
The captain's tongue to bid us whither.

FALIERO.

You,

Sir admiral, spake but late of one to me  
Who lacking not the will should lack not power  
To carve this monstrous quarry limb from limb  
And give its flesh for beasts less vile to feed ;  
Spake you not somewise thus ?

ADMIRAL.

Ay, verily—seeing

Heart, as I deemed, in you, sir, toward the work ;  
And, seeing it yet, still say so.

FALIERO.

Men have seen

Worse, and have rashlier spoken, yet have won  
Praise for sharp sight and judgment. Friends, meseems  
Yet none of you will say that in this cause  
We lack no larger counsel than our own,  
No further scope of foresight, though the path  
Be ne'er so strait and secret : foot and eye  
Must keep, for all this close and narrow way,  
The vantage yet of outlook far and free  
Lest in the darkness where our snares are set  
Ourselves be trapped as wolves by twilight.

ADMIRAL.

Sir,

Some six or seven I wot of, being called in  
To single counsel severally, shall give  
Each man, so please you, judgment on the mean  
That may be found for present action.

FALIERO.

This

The rudest march of rough-shod strategy  
Could push not past and miss it, that we need  
Ere noon or night may crown conspiracy  
Not six or seven to post about the squares  
But some sixteen or seventeen chiefs elect,  
With each some forty swordsmen at his back  
Well weaponed and arrayed, but held in doubt,  
Even till the perfect hour strike, on what end  
Their enterprise is bent and bound : and these,  
When dawns the night or day determined, shall

At signal given fall here and there in fray,  
With stormy semblance made of casual strife  
To right and left enkindling : so shall I  
Find instant cause or plea to bid the bells  
Toll summons from St. Mark's, and they thereon  
To press from all sides in and every street  
Down toward the church ; where, finding these our  
    lords

And all chief ministers of the common wrong  
Who stand chief princes of the common weal  
Drawn forth by fear together to demand  
Whence thus leaps forth such riotous noise by night,  
Full may they fall upon them unaware  
And drive on heaps and slay them.

BERTUCCIO.

Sir—

FALIERO.

What says

Our nephew—sworn so late upon our side  
Deep as man's faith may pledge him? Does the charge  
Mislike thee? Didst thou lie, or didst thou not  
Swear?

BERTUCCIO.

Sir, to no such enterprise I swore  
As treads through blood of blameless men toward ends  
Whereof I wist not ; nor, though these be pure,  
To me may general slaughter seem absolved  
Or by their grace transfigured and redeemed  
From damnable to righteous. Nay, my lord,

Reply not as your eyes make answer : I  
Take back no word of all I said, and now  
Reiterate, seeing they need reiteration : nought  
That you shall bid me, not though God forbid,  
Will I not, if I may, do : but what end,  
How high soe'er and single-eyed, can bid  
Spill innocent blood, and stand up spotless ? Think,  
As these men should, being pure of purpose—think  
If truth or trust or freedom, righteousness,  
Faith, reverence, love, or loyalty, be fruits  
That burst or burgeon from so dire a seed  
As were in these rebellion, and in you  
Treason.

FALIERO.

Treason ?

BERTUCCIO.

The word should scare you not,  
If not this enterprise may scare you.

ISRAELLO.

Duke,  
Strange ears, it seems, have caught our counsel.

CALENDARO.

Peace :

Howe'er the strife of counsels end, we stand  
Safe : here is yet no traitor.

BERTUCCIO.

He that holds  
His life in fear of me may hold it safe

As I will hold mine honour. Sir, what end,  
(*To Faliero.*)

Though this device should drink not innocent blood,  
And violence fall not save on wrongdoers' heads,  
What end shall come of this red enterprise,  
What fruit of such a root as bears for flower  
Carnage that strikes by midnight?

ISRAELLO.

First for us  
Justice, and next for him who doth us right  
A crown.

BERTUCCIO.

A crown, and justice? night and day  
Shall first be yoked together.

CALENDARO.

Truth is that :  
If right and wrong engender, they bring forth  
No true-begotten offspring.

BERTUCCIO.

Sir, can you  
Hear and keep silence when a citizen born  
Of Venice proffers you for hire of blood,  
For price of death dealt and a darkling blow,  
Kingship?

FALIERO.

It was not well said—no, nor thought—  
Of any, born republican,—albeit

The commonweal be cankered now at core—  
That healing even for plaguespots might be found  
In such a leper's bed as monarchy  
Keeps warm with prostitution, till therein  
A people's lifeblood, foul with sloth and shame,  
Rot round its heart and perish.

ISRAELLO.

I would have you  
Reign but as first of citizens, and see  
Crowned in your name the people.

FALIERO.

Good my friend,  
The foulest reigns whence ever earth smelt foul  
When all her wastes and cities reeked of Rome  
Were by that poisonous plea sown, watered, fed :  
The worst called emperors ever, kings whose names  
Serve even for slaves to curse with, lived by vote  
And shone by delegation. We desire  
For all men who desire not wrong to man  
Freedom : but save for love's sake and the right's  
Freedom to serve hath no man.

ISRAELLO.

Love should give  
Right to the crowned redeemer of the state  
To bid men serve for thankfulness and love  
The man who did them service.

FALIERO.

And to them



Right to bow down, and serve, and abdicate  
Manhood? Not God could give man, though he would,  
Power to do this, and right to live : for they  
That so should cast off manfulness, and tread  
Their birthright out in blood or trampled mire,  
Could claim, being men, but right to kill and die,  
Or live, being thralls, as beasts that feed and groan  
Till death release them into dust. No more.  
To serve and reign for me were shame alike,  
And for my masters or my slaves no less,  
Inseparable and reverberate, crime from crime  
And shame on shame for ever.

ADMIRAL.

Sir, well said.

CALENDARO.

Ay, and well done : such words are deeds, and wear  
Swords girt for service on them.

FALIERO.

Yet of these

And all words else enough is ours and more,  
If very swords be slower to speak than they.  
Ye have my mind, I yours : remains but this,  
That each betake him toward his office.

ADMIRAL.

Sir,

Farewell awhile we bid you, giving God  
Thanks that he gives us and so great a cause  
A chief whose heart is great as it.



FALIERO.

Farewell.

[*Exeunt Admiral, Calendaro, and Israello.*]

And how may this now please thee? Have I said  
Ill?

BERTUCCIO.

No, my lord.

FALIERO.

Or shall not we do well  
To raise up Venice from the dust wherein  
Men trample down her servants, and to bring  
All haughtiest heads and highest of tyrants down  
Thither?

BERTUCCIO.

My lord, it may be.

FALIERO.

Nay, by God,  
Thou art older and colder of spirit and blood than I;  
I am hoar of head, but thou, thou art sere at heart,  
And grey in soul as fearful forethought makes  
Old men whom time bows lowlier down than me.  
What yet of this mislikes thee? Wouldst thou make  
The rough ways plain for freedom's feet, yet spare  
Tyrants?

BERTUCCIO.

Of all this blood that shall be shed,  
If none indeed be taintless, I would spare  
No drop that knows infection: but, my sire,  
Who dares say this?

FALIERO.

I.

BERTUCCIO.

Nay, not you, but wrath,  
Your wrath it is that says so.

FALIERO.

No : for proof

With iron tongues innumerable echoing me  
Cries out upon the house-tops, fills and thrills  
Streets, bridges, squares, with shame from roof to roof  
Reverberated resounding as to toll  
The deep death-knell of honour. None there is,  
Not one that in this wrongdoing bears not part,  
Not one but we in Venice, we whose hands  
Are pledged to quench in blood this funeral fire  
That else will burn up justice, courage, faith,  
And leave but shame alive and vileness free  
And cowardice crowned as conqueror. Here she lies,  
Our mother, mightiest late of all things throned  
And hailed of earth as heavenly, naked, soiled,  
Mocked, scourged, and spat on : not her first of sons  
And not her last escapes, evades, eschews  
Communion in one sacrament of shame,  
Partakes not, pledges not the wine of wrong,  
The bread of outrage : first and last are one :  
Bound of base hands down on her pyre alive,  
Fast bound with iron and with infamy,  
Our commonweal groans, knowing herself a thing

For slaves and kings to scoff at. Shall this be  
With thy goodwill for ever? Not with mine  
Shall it; nay, not though scarce a tithe were left  
When justice hath fulfilled her fiery doom  
Again to build up Venice.

BERTUCCIO.

Who shall build  
On graves and ashes, out of fire and blood,  
Or citadel or temple? Where on earth,  
For man what stronghold, or what shrine for God,  
Rose ever so from ruin?

FALIERO.

Rome—if Rome  
Lie not—was built on innocent blood: and here  
No fratricidal auspice shall renew  
Life, but a sacrificial sign again  
Inaugurate Venice for her sons to praise  
And all the world to worship. These are not  
Brethren, nor men nor sons of men are these,  
But worms that creep and couple, soil and sting,  
Whose blood though foul shall purge pollution hence  
And leave the shore clean as the sea. Would God  
Their hour to-night could ere its natural time  
Ring from St. Mark's, albeit the bell that struck  
Rang me to rest for ever! I shall sleep  
Thereafter, sound as triumph or as death  
That strikes, and seals up triumph.

BERTUCCIO.

Sir, I know,

If by strange hap my sire could err, with him  
For me to err were better, even to death,  
Defeat, dispraise, and all that darkens death,  
Than swerving from his side to shine, and live  
Acclaimed of all men's praises. Be your will  
Done : for as God's your will shall be for me  
A stronghold and a safeguard though I die. [*Exeunt.*

## ACT IV.

SCENE I.—*A cabinet in the palace of Lioni.**Enter LIONI and BELTRAMO.*

LIONI.

Speak now, then : here at least is none but I.  
Speak.

BELTRAMO.

Sir, you dream not what you bid me do.

LIONI.

By good St. Mark, not I : but this should be  
Some honest thing, or hardly wouldst thou dare  
So thrust and press upon me.

BELTRAMO.

No, my lord.

I doubt it is not.

LIONI.

Get thee hence, then : out :

Is there no room for all dishonest works  
In all the range of Venice, that a knave  
Must make me closet counsellor with him,  
Here emptying forth his knavery? By this light,  
I think thou art here belated, mad with wine  
Or drunk with brawling: yet again I think  
Thou darest not thus abuse me.

BELTRAMO.

Sir, I dare  
Nor hold my peace nor hardly speak; yet this  
I cannot but beseech you to believe,  
That if between two doubts I hang distraught  
The stronger cause that plucks me by the heart  
Is care and duty toward you, born of love;  
The weaker, half disrooted now, constrains  
My conscience yet for shame's sake; which nathless  
I needs must here cast off me. Sir, you know  
How yet no long time since it is that we  
Communed of matters held for me too high,  
Of unendurable evil endured, of wrong  
Whence all men's hearts were wasted as with fire,  
Of hope that helped not, patience grey with pain,  
Long-suffering sick to death, and violence roused  
To range among the violent: dangerous dreams  
Whereof your wisdom, though with temperate words,  
Rebuking them, chastised me: whence, my lord,  
I come to shew you now what seed hath sprung  
To what swift height and amplitude of doom  
Far overshadowing Venice. You desired

A sign, as they that knew not Christ, and lo,  
My lord, a sign I bring you. Twelve hours more  
Shall see this moon of April half burnt out  
And half the squares and highways of this town  
A sea of blood full foaming toward the verge  
Where it shall meet our natural sea, and bid  
Her waters, widening over bank and bridge,  
Swell strong with storm of murder's making. This  
May none avert : God wills it : man desires  
And shall by God's grace do it : but you, my lord,  
Keep from those ways your foot at dawn, albeit  
The cry be raised of enemies at our gates,  
Of Genoa round our port in sail ; and keep  
Your lifeblood from that torrent which shall drown  
All palaces else that shall by dawn send forth  
Their lords at summons sounded from St. Mark's :  
And so, as now through me, God save you.

LIONI.

Stay.

Thou didst not think to say so and pass forth  
With no more question, scathless ?

BELTRAMO.

Good my lord,  
This did I think, that from your noble hand,  
In quittance of my deep devotion shown  
At risk and rate of honour and of life  
To keep your head unscathed, I should not find  
Disgrace for guerdon, or for thanksgiving  
Death.



LIONI.

Art thou all made up of words, and hast  
No thought that runs not loose upon thy tongue  
To tell thee such a warning given as thine  
Can die not out within mine ear, and leave  
Unwarned of peril, if peril indeed there be,  
Venice?

BELTRAMO.

I would but do you service.

LIONI.

Thanks.

A worthy service were it, my worthy friend,  
Of me and thee, that thou shouldst bid me crawl  
Aside from general ruin of all the state,  
And I should grovel at thy beck, and creep  
Darkling away from danger. What is this  
That under a flickering veil of vehement words  
Thou shewest and wilt not shew me?

BELTRAMO.

Death, I say :

Death.

LIONI.

If I knew thee not no coward or cur,  
Tonight I should misknow thee. Night and day  
Is death not still about us, here and there,  
Alive around the ways and hours of life,  
That what we think or what we are fain to do

We should not do for death's sake? How these  
    knaves,  
Whose life is service or rebellion, fear  
Death ! and a child high-born would shame them.

BELTRAMO.

If

Death seem so gracious in a great man's eye,  
Die, my lord : I, too mean to live your friend,  
Am not your murderer.

LIONI.

    Nay, nor any man's,  
If I can stay thine hand betimes. I would not  
By force withhold thee, nor by violence wring  
What yet thou hast left unspoken forth : but hence  
Thou goest not out, and I left ignorant here  
What purpose haled thee hither.

BELTRAMO.

    Why, to you  
Friendship ; and haply hate to no man else  
Of all now damned alive to darkness.

LIONI.

Good :

The slot is hot : I scent the quarry. So,  
Some certain of thy kind are bound and sworn  
To do the ignoble and the poor man right  
By murderous justice done on us, who wrong  
Our fellow-folk with flaunt of wicked wealth

And vex their baseness with nobility?  
And with our Doge's blood and ours ye would  
Make ripe that harvest, fill that winepress full,  
Which now not fifty years from this, ye know,  
Dolcino thought to reap and tread, and bring  
Equal and simple rule of right again  
Among us called by Christ's name here on earth—  
And how he died remembering, inch from inch  
Rent living with red iron, and his bride  
Burnt limb from limb before his eyes, thou wouldst  
Eschew such end as theirs was?

BELTRAMO.

Twice, my lord,  
You have erred : I stand not here to save myself ;  
Nor stands our lord the Doge in danger yet,  
If he that hears me speak love honour.

LIONI.

Nay,  
But if this be not wine that swells thy speech,  
No less it is than murderous madness. How  
May death stretch wing above all heads of ours  
And shadow not our master's? Him, of all  
High-born in Venice, should conspiracy  
First menace, risen from darkness such as broods  
About such hearts as hate us. If thou be  
Mad, be not yet thine own self-murderer : think—  
For wine it is not that is wild in thee—  
What peril even the least of all thy words,  
If here thou pause, hath pulled upon thee.

BELTRAMO.

That

Had I cast thought on, here I should not be—  
Nor Lioni, nor the noblest born my lord,  
Have power or breath to threaten or implore  
Me, nor the least in Venice.

LIONI.

Friend, from me

Nor threat nor prayer need any fear or hope  
Who feeds on air and sunshine ; least of all  
Thou : for of all men bred of baser kind,  
Could I perchance fear any, thee at least  
I could not, having called thee friend : for one  
Who doubts or fears or dreams ingratitude,  
Or holds for possible disloyalty,  
Stands proven in sight of his own secret soul  
As possibly, should chance or time prevail,  
Disloyal and ungrateful. Such was I,  
If man may say so, never : yet meseems  
That unproved of cowardice I may crave  
To know, hadst thou been haply less my friend,  
How should mine hand have lost the power it hath,  
My lips lacked breath to question thee? or how  
Should not the Doge, being our lord of lords,  
Incarnate and impersonate Venice, bear  
Part in our general danger?

BELTRAMO.

Nay, my lord,

I said not that ; part shall he bear therein,  
God wot, and unendangered. Please you, sir,—  
Please it your pride and pure nobility—  
To spare your smile and shrug—give so much ease,  
This hour, to lip and shoulder—I would say  
What, being derided and endured—forborne,  
Insulted, and forgiven,—it might not please  
Your servant for your scornful sake to say.  
You will not ask me, what?

LIONI.

Assuredly,

No.

BELTRAMO.

Speak, then, and be cursed of God and man,  
You bid me, who forbear to bid me.

LIONI.

I

But bid thee now no longer hold me here  
Awake and vexed with vehement speech wherein  
If aught be honest nought is clear enough  
To speak thee sound of wits : and didst thou so,  
Of God and man forgiveness might I win  
If I should bid God curse thee, and my men  
Lead forth or thrust thee from my gates. Were this  
For me—the word still twittering on thy tongue—  
Death?

BELTRAMO.

Yea, my lord : and death for all your kin.

LIONI.

By Christ, but this is fiery wine indeed  
That speaks in thee so steadfast. Wouldst thou not  
Sleep?

BELTRAMO.

Soon and sound enough will you, my lord,  
Sleep, if my speech be slighted, that I speak  
Out of true heart and thankfulness.

LIONI.

And where,  
When thus by night red riot runs and reels  
And murder rides out revelling, where shall be  
The keepers of our state? where, first of all,  
The Doge?

BELTRAMO.

They that keep our state so well  
That only force can purge it—they shall be  
Where sheep and oxen, fowl and fish are found,  
When some great feast is toward and guests come in—  
Dead on a heap : and he, their lord and ours—  
Where think you, sir?

LIONI.

Nay, man, God knows, not I :  
First be it or last of all the sacrifice,  
Where the old man falls, there lies a brave man slain—  
Head, hand, and heart of Venice.

BELTRAMO.

He shall be



Where when a fight is won the general stands  
Red-footed and red-handed and brow-bound  
With bays that drip down blood.

LIONI.

Your captain?

BELTRAMO.

Ay.

Believe me not, and perish.

LIONI.

I am more like  
To live, and see thee whipped or hanged, and not  
Believe thee.

BELTRAMO.

Choose : I have given you, sir, the chance  
That none but one of all your kind is given :  
Cast from your hand your luck and life, you die,  
Self-slaughtered : on your head, not mine, the charge  
Lies of your bloodshed.

LIONI.

Man, if this be truth,  
The sun may reel from heaven, and darkness rise  
For dawn upon the world.

BELTRAMO.

I cannot tell.  
They say such things have been, sir.



LIONI.

Nay, but none

Like this: Faliero captain of thy crew?

Thine?

BELTRAMO.

Ay, my lord, we are despicable—and he  
A man despised as we are, and most of all,  
Being highest in place; more grievous and more gross  
Is thence his wrong, and keener thence the shame  
That gnaws his heart away with fangs of fire.

LIONI.

And he, to be revenged of us,—of them  
Who spared a hound the halter, not the scourge—  
Hath leagued himself, thou sayest, with knaves by night  
To wash the ways with slaughter—set a knife  
To the open throat of sleep—break trust, slay faith,  
Strike through the heart of honour? stab the law,  
Set for his mother a snare to strangle her,  
Work miracles of murder? change a name  
That now rings out a clarion in men's ears  
For one that hisses like a snake, and means  
Treason?

BELTRAMO.

Sir, were it but for his behoof,  
To feed his own lusts fat with gold and blood,  
Gird his own brows with empire, steal, stab, lie,  
And reign, abhorred and abject, over swine  
That once were men, but changed their heart and head  
To grovel, snout and groin, in slavery—then  
Shame were it indeed, and shameful change, for him,

Being man, to shed man's innocent blood, break faith,  
And spit at God, and triumph, and be damned  
More deep than Cain with Judas, and his grave  
For guerdon take the spittle and the spurns  
Of all true men for ever : but the lord  
Who leads us forth of bondage, though he lead  
Through this red sea, struck no more loyal stroke  
With heart more single or hand more honest once  
Off Istria, nor at Zara.

LIONI.

Once? ay, twice,  
Our lord was found our saviour ; now, if this  
Be monstrous truth thou tell'st me, he, grown hoar  
With glorious years and works, would leave his name  
A traitor's, red and foul for ever. Nay,  
But if this be no drunken dream or lie  
No plea can cleanse him of the murderous taint  
That reeks from names abominable of man  
As manslaughterers of their brethren.

BELTRAMO.

Sir, if Cain  
Be smitten again of Abel ere he die,  
Shall Abel stand attainted on this charge  
As fratricide or traitor?

LIONI.

Why, my friend,  
I lack the lawyer's wit and tongue to prate  
As advocate against thee : this is all  
I can, to assure myself and heaven and thee

That this destruction thou wouldst bid me shun  
Shall ere it fall on us be stayed. Reply  
Not now, nor here : for hence thou goest not out  
Till I tonight have communed with the lords  
Nasoni and Cornaro, who shall make  
Sharp inquisition of thy news and thee  
Here, ere the council meet, and lay strict hand  
On all found part of this conspiracy  
Or like to dip red hands in danger, when  
Strange darkness rides in the air, and strange design  
Makes hot men's hearts with hope of evil. Thou  
Shalt rest unhurt ; but we will know of thee  
All needful for prevention.

BELTRAMO.

Christ our Lord

Knows—

LIONI.

That nor threat nor rack shall wring from thee  
One word beyond thy will : so be it : I think  
All we could win or wish of thee shall need  
Nor force nor menace, promise, price, nor prayer,  
To press forth easily as a grape gives wine.  
Thou art tender-souled and honest, thankful, true,  
A gentle knave and worthy : what is said  
Unsay thou canst not, nor undo the deed  
Done when thy footfall smote my threshold. So,  
Be patient : this alone thou lackest : wait  
And keep close lips till I come back.

BELTRAMO.

My lord—

LIONI.

My lord and thine is God, who led thee here  
To save the world this ill, that day should be  
And not this city—that the sun should rise  
And see not Venice. How, by whom or whence,  
Thou knewest of this—what part thou shouldst have  
played

On this full stage of death, had no remorse  
With timely pity toward me pricked thine heart—  
I ask thee not : to them that I bring back,  
Not me, shalt thou make answer. I would lay  
No force upon thee more than needs : but here  
Fast under guard abiding till they come  
Safe shalt thou rest as Venice now through thee.

[*Exeunt.*]SCENE II.—*The balcony of the ducal palace.*

FALIERO and BERTUCCIO.

FALIERO.

Dawn—is it yet not dawn? Thine eyes, being young,  
Are dazed with timeless waking ; mine, that looked,  
Ere thine saw birth, on battle, yet have strength  
To outwatch the vigil of a boy's, and tell  
Sunrise from set of stars or moonfall. See !  
Light—is not light there ?

BERTUCCIO.

Sir, if time speak true,  
It lacks an hour to sunrise : holier lights  
Are these that hold procession through the square  
With chants of penitence to churchward, timed  
To match the death of darkness.

FALIERO.

Didst thou think  
God haply was not with us, that thy smile  
Should mock their chant or me? Nay, thee he sends  
This token in his witness : I desired  
None : but if God be no unrighteous God,  
And hold us fatherlike in keeping, here  
Might man believe a comfortable sign  
Sent as with sacred and superb acclaim  
To match the death indeed of darkness, left  
Too long upon the waters. Dawn shall be,  
Thou sayest, an hour from hence : I know not : if,  
By death of mine and thine and all we love,  
Dawn verily in an hour might rise, and rest  
As once on Rome, an agelong daylight—boy,  
Wouldst thou, having thy fair long life to give,  
Thy fair long life that should be, spare or shrink  
Or grudge or groan to cast it from thine hand  
As might a child a pebble, more than I  
To give my thin-spun days and nights of life  
Left, which I stake and smile at?

BERTUCCIO.

No, my lord :

If God know aught of man or man know aught,  
God knows I know I would not.

FALIERO.

Yea, and I

Know it : God love thee as I love, my boy,  
For this we know of thee. And this do thou  
Know likewise, and hold fast : that if today  
Dawn rise not, but the darkness drift us down,  
And leave our hopes as wrecks and waifs despised  
Of men that walk by daylight, not with us  
Shall faith decline from earth or justice end,  
Or freedom, which if dead should bid them die,  
Rot, though the works and very names of us,  
And all the fruit we looked for, nipped of winds  
And gnawn of worms, and all the stem that bore,  
And all the root, wax rotten. Here shall be  
Freedom, or never in this time-weary world  
Justice ; nor ever shall the sunrise know  
A sight to match the morning, nor the sea  
Hear from the sound of living souls on earth,  
Free as her foam, and righteous as her tides,  
Just, equal, awless, perfect, even as she,  
A word to match her music. If we fail,  
We are even but we—I, thou, and these our friends  
That rise or fall beside us : if we thrive,  
Not I and thou and they triumph—not we  
Prosper—but that which if we live or die  
Alike and absolute, unhurt and whole,  
Endures, being proven of our mortalities



Immortal—yea, being shown by sign of loss  
And token of subdued infirmity,  
And ruin, and all insistence of defeat,  
And laughing lips and trampling heels of men  
That smile and stamp above us buried, shown  
Triumphant. Righteousness alone hath right  
For love of all found loveliest, freedom, truth,  
Faith, reason, hope, and honour, to require  
Life at our hands : and if on sand or stone  
Or if on fruitful ground the life we give  
Fall, shed with all our heart and full free will,  
This not concerns us, this, come storm or sun,  
Regards us nowise : time hath all in hand :  
And time, I think, shall hurl this world to hell,  
Or give—not now, perchance, nor many a year,  
Nor many a century hence—God knows—but yet  
Some day, some year, some century, give our sons  
Freedom. Nor haply then may we deserve  
Remembrance : better many a man than we  
May prove himself, and perish : yet, if God  
Fail us not so, that, failing, we should die  
Cowards, it may be we shall sleep not scorned  
Of all that hold our faith for ever. Now  
Go thou and watch, but not with me, who here  
Would keep my watch alone till morning. God  
Be with thee. (*Exit Bertuccio.*) God? may God  
indeed tonight  
Be with us? Yet red-handed men of death,  
Scarce breathing now from battle, praise his name,  
Give thanks for happy slaughters, mix with prayer



The panting passion of their hearts that beat  
Like vultures' wings toward bloodshed : and shall we  
Dare not desire of God his comfort, we  
That war not save with wrongs abhorred of him,  
That smite not heads of open enemies, men  
Found manful in the fielded front of war,  
Fair foes, and worth fair fighting, but of slaves  
Who mar the name they mock with reverence, make  
The fair fame foul of freedom, soil and stain  
The seamless robe wherein their fathers clothed  
For bridal of one bridegroom with the sea  
Venice? When time hath wiped her tyrants out—  
Time that now ripening thrusts into mine hand  
The scythe to reap this harvest—earth has known  
Never, since life sprang first against the sun,  
So fair, so splendid, so sublime a life  
As this that God shall give her : and to me,  
To me and mine who served and saved her, life  
Shall God give surely, such as dateless time  
Spares, and its light puts out the shadow of death.

*(Voices chanting from below.)*

*Quis tam celer, quis tam fortis,*

*Pedem qui præcurrat mortis?*

*Quis e fractis tumbæ portis*

*Præter unum redeat?*

*Præter unum Te reversus*

*Nemo, Christe, solem versus,*

*Mortis fluctu semel mersus,*

*Surget, sol dum cælo stat.*

FALIERO.

Yea, but if many waters cannot quench  
Love, nor the strong floods drown it, how shall not  
Man's love for man, that saves and smites, to bring  
For every slave deliverance, and for all  
The peace of equal righteousness and right,  
Though girt with even this iron girdle round  
And robed in this red raiment, rise again  
And as a swimmer against a sundering wave  
Beat back the billow of death, and climb, and laugh  
Loud laughs of thanksgiving? Strong is death,  
But stronger lives man's love who dies for man  
Than all ye fear and trust in, heaven or hell.

(*Chanting again.*)

*De profundis tenebrarum  
Ardor atrox animarum  
Quas non legum vis tuarum,  
Christe, fecit humiles,  
Ex infernis in superna  
Fervet: quem cum lux æterna  
Tangit, fit ut herba verna  
Quam conculcat vulgi pes.*

FALIERO.

O tender laws of bland humility  
Wherewith priests' hearts are girdled! These are they  
Who drink and eat God, and who kiss and stroke  
Satan; who burn men's living limbs with fire  
And hold themselves God's chosen and blest of God

And me of God rejected and accursed  
Because in wrath long since I smote a priest  
Who bore in hand God palpable, whereon  
The curse of the eucharist I violated,  
And of God's blessing made myself a curse,  
Fell or shall one day fall and smite me. Nay,  
If humbleness to these must buy men heaven,  
Let all high hope stand outcast thence with me.

(*Chanting again.*)

*Virgo sancta, Christe clemens,  
Homo miser, homo demens,  
Ubi Sathanas it semens,  
Hunc secutus, nescit vos ;  
Mortis messor, edax vitæ,  
Spernit vos : at vos auditæ  
Preces animæ contritæ  
Flectant : nam quid sumus nos ?*

FALIERO.

Not men, God knows, are ye nor any of you,  
Priests, and the flocks of priesthood : sheep or swine  
Or wolves at heart man finds you. Christ our Lord  
Chief light and lord of men, made manifest  
Before no bloodier judgment-seat than yours  
Man, and the son of man—no lord of priests,  
No God of slaves who hears their tyrants pray,  
And sees them, praying, smite earth and strengthen  
hell,

And hallows hell with blessing—he, being just,  
 Should think, if he be God indeed, and hear  
 Me now and all men away, if this word  
 Be bearable, that man, being smitten, should  
 Still turn his cheek and smite not. Nay, but, Lord,  
 Hadst thou been mere man, even as I, and borne  
 Shame, knowing thyself no God, whom no man's  
     hand

Could turn indeed to a thing dishonoured—nay,  
 But one whom shame might scourge and scar like me,  
 Brand on thy brows and ravin round thine heart—  
 Thou, that couldst bear for us the body's death,  
 Thou couldst not, Christ, have borne it: hadst thou  
     borne,

Not higher of heart but less thou hadst been than we.

(*Chanting again.*)

*Fac ut metatmali sator*  
*Mali messem, mundi Stator,*  
*Une, trine, tu Creator,*  
*Pater, Fili, Spiritus:*  
*Tuque, boni nobis bone*  
*Dator, Marce, tu patrone,*  
*Ab inferno nos latrone,*  
*Salva nos ab hostibus.*

FALIERO.

And I, for these a hellish thief in wait,  
 A midnight-mantled slayer—for these am I  
 Their headsman, I that was their head: but thou,

St. Mark, our lord, no better friend than I,  
Not thou, not thou, to Venice. Have not these  
Been sowers indeed of evil, and shall they reap  
For harvest of a desolated field  
Good? Have they not made wide the wilderness,  
Kept fresh with blood the roots of tares and thorns,  
Drawn dry the breasts of pale sterility,  
Wasted the ways with fire and sown with salt,  
That they should gather grain? Our foes are these,  
Not Genoa, not the stranger, south nor east,  
Turk nor Hungarian, but thy sons alone,  
Venice, who mock their mother : thine it is,  
Thine hand by mine that smites them, and redeems  
Thine equal name for ever, lest the world  
Lack this that none as thou shalt give hath given,  
The light of equal manhood's equity,  
Full freedom, sovereign where no sovereign sits.  
But wilt not thou speak yet, Mark? From thy tongue  
Time is it now the word should break, that sounds  
To them that do thee this dishonour death  
And loftier life to Venice : yet not yet  
Thy belfry through the sleep of tyrants flings  
The knell that is a clarion, and mine ear  
Takes only through the gleaming April gloom  
That rustle of whispering water against the dawn  
Which wakes before the world may. Wind is none  
To warn our watery streets of storm, which here  
Broods windward, hard on breaking ; if ye wist,  
Friends !—Will the prayers of priests not wake thee,  
then ?

(*Chanting again.*)

*Te, cùm timor barbarorum  
Corda conflictavit, horum  
Turba prima te tuorum  
Conclamabant Veneti :  
Te, sub umbrâ Christi crucis,  
Fontem te videmus lucis ;  
Tanti stas tutamen ducis,  
Tanti fautor populi.*

FALIERO.

Ay, for no poor faint people shalt thou speak,  
For no mean city : lion-like shall they,  
With feet once loosened from the strangling toils,  
Go forth to plant thy lion. But the duke,  
The leader, red of hand and hoar of hair,  
An old man clothed in slaughters—but the chief,  
Worthy worship and honour once of all,  
I, Marino Faliero, citizen,  
Soldier, servant of Venice—how shall I  
Follow, with feet washed here in civic blood,  
The flag once more by civic hearts and hands  
Exalted ? Nay, the fugitive feet that here  
Found harbourage first, the feeble knees that fell,  
Suppliant, and maimed with fear of foes behind,  
Imploring first thy comfort, when the Hun  
Raged as a fire against them—nay, the hands  
That first here staked a camp in the eastward sea,



Trembling, and toward thine emblem and thy Lord's  
Uplift with wail and worship—these that first  
Scarce here gat rest and refuge where to die  
Were worthier yet to found than I may be  
To rear again from ruin Venice. O,  
That thou wouldst pray God for me now tonight  
To speed the wheels of morning! Will this hour  
Stretch not its darkness out to noon, and bid  
The day lie dumb, lest when the morning speaks  
Death answer with a cry from clamorous hell  
And strike the sun down darkling, that the world  
May reel in fearful travail out of life?

(*Chanting again.*)

*Mors immanis, mors immensa,  
Tendit fila semper tensa ;  
Illi regum sordet mensa,  
Illi vana ducum vox :  
Mors immensa, mors immanis,  
Instat rebus mundi vanis ;  
Fugit claris lux e fanis,  
Mors cùm dixit, Fiat nox.*

FALIERO.

Let there be night, and there was night—who says  
That? Nay, though heaven and earth were they that  
    bade,  
No less were light immortal, night no less



Fugitive, abject, void, vain, outcast, frail,  
In the eye of dawn that seeks and sees not night.  
Vain if my voice be, vainer yet are these  
That swell from choral throats the choir of death  
With prostrate noise of praises ; vain as fear,  
Penitence, passion, ache of afterthought,  
When man hath once laid hand on high design  
And armed his heart with purpose. Death and life  
In God's clear eyes are one thing, wrong and right  
Are twain for ever : nor though night kiss day  
Shall right kiss wrong and die not. Let the world  
End ; if the spirit expire not, then in mine  
The will that gave wing to this enterprise  
Shall fade not, nor the trust I had alive  
To serve not wrath but righteousness at last  
With offering shed of sin for sacrifice.  
Was I not chosen as helmsman of my state,  
As herdsman of my people ? Woe were mine  
If when the dogs turn wolves to rend the sheep  
I durst not drown or hang them, with their jaws  
Yet foul and full of flesh and wet red fleece,  
Or when the ship reels right and left on death,  
Storm-stunned, and loud with mutiny as with fear,  
Would ease her not of mutinous rioters, fain  
To bind me foot and hand, and bid the wheel  
Swing as the storm wills till the tumbling prow  
Plunge, and dive, and the wreck bear down the crew  
And them, still drunk with rage of revel, whence  
No sunken state rose ever. Let them live  
And all this people perish ? God, not I.

(Chanting again.)

*Miserere, Pastor vere,  
Pastor clemens, miserere,  
Sere iudex, ultor sere,  
Deus magne, Deus mi:  
Quanquam plena vanitatis,  
Fracta vi, laborat ratis,  
Miserere civitatis,  
Miserere domini.*

FALIERO.

Yea, pity and mercy need we both—of man  
They that of man shall find not, and of God  
I, that may haply find it. Vanity  
Too vain indeed for men most frail of soul  
Were this, that one of fourscore years should dream  
To twine himself with trembling treasonous hands  
False wreaths of timeless triumph, steal the crown  
By freedom woven about his country's head  
To change its green leaf into gold, and wear  
A diadem's weight brow-bound of empire, till,  
Some three days thence, death, laughing broad and  
blind,  
Laid hand upon his bloodred hand, and led  
To hell the hoar head and the murderous heart,  
For three days' kingdom's sake perpetually  
Damned, and dishonoured. Never man that sinned,  
Traitor nor tyrant, thief nor manslayer, none,

Did thus, nor would, being less than mad with sin—  
Not Nero, nor Iscariot. I nor mine  
By this may thrive more than the meanest born  
That plies his oar in Venice. One for all  
Strikes, that for each man all his brethren may  
Think, speak, and strike hereafter. Shall not this  
Be? for the woful warning song of wail  
Hath ended, and the new song only heard  
Is now the sun's at sundawn. Now, St. Mark,  
Speak! for thine hour, even thine, it is that strikes,  
First hour of this first day that sees thy sons  
Free, father, as thy soul is free in heaven,  
With no man's shadow cast on them but thine.  
Why should the sun keep silence here? thou seest,  
Night seals not up for us the lips of light  
As on the downward verge of hell: and thou,  
Why should thy tongue be sealed, and all our hope  
Perish, as might some heartless bondman's, worn  
With wasting sloth and patience? Night and hell,  
With all their mortal ministers in man,  
Shame, doubt, and base endurance, force and fear,  
Cold heart, and abject custom, these are they  
That fight against us: fain, with all this aid,  
Fain would night thrust us back and bind us fast  
Where no man hears the sun's word: nor may these  
By harmless hands be fought with, nor subdued  
With bloodless or with blameless weapons: yet,  
If hell be here not yet, ere man make earth  
Hell, here today the sun should speak, and thou  
Make answer, Mark, and help us. Yea, for here

Night hath not put the sun to silence : dawn  
Speaks : and we lack but one loud word from thee.

*Enter an Officer with Guards.*

OFFICER

My lord, you are prisoner of the state, and mine.

FALIERO.

Thine ! Does my nephew live ?

OFFICER.

He lives as you—

Prisoner.

FALIERO.

I think I am overwatched, and thou  
Part of the dream I walk in unaware—  
A thing made out of slumber. Many a night  
I have slept but ill—never so sound as this.  
Why tolls the bell not from St. Mark's ?

OFFICER.

My lord,

By mandate of the sovereign council met  
The warden of the bell-tower had in charge  
To see that none should sound the bells today.  
The gates are fastened of the palace square :  
The Ten, with twenty chosen in aid of them  
Forth of the chiefest of the state, are set  
To judge the prisoners even this hour attain  
On mortal charge of murderous treason.

FALIERO.

If

True men be they that shall arraign me, I  
May stand in sooth approved their traitor.

OFFICER.

Sir,

For your sole name's sake is it of all the rest  
That this new court of judgment sits, to speak  
On this great cause no common sentence.

FALIERO.

No :

Strange court, and stranger trial, and most of all  
Strange will the strange court's judgment held today  
Read where it stands on record. Good my friend,  
I will not trouble thee nor vex thy lords  
With tarriance nor with wrangling : I desire  
Nothing of man, nor aught of God save peace.  
I shall not lack it long : yet would I say  
Perchance a word before I die, because  
I have loved this city. Lead me where they sit  
That I may stand and speak my soul and go :  
The rest is death's and God's : if these be just,  
Judge they between us, and their will be mine.

[*Exeunt.*]

## ACT V.

SCENE I.—*The Hall of the Council of Ten.*BENINTENDE *and Senators sitting. Enter FALIERO, guarded.*

BENINTENDE.

Justice has given her doom against the accused,  
Israello and Calendaro : they that fled  
To Chioggia lie in ward, and hence await  
An equal sentence : this remains, to speak  
Judgment on him, the guiltiest head of all  
And murderous heart of this conspiracy,  
Head once and heart of Venice, present here  
To bear the award of retributive law  
Laid on her traitor and your enemy.   Sirs,  
Is it your will to hear him answer ?

SENATORS.

Yea.

BENINTENDE.

Marin Faliero, leave is thine to speak.



FALIERO.

And leave is yours to slay me : yet for both,  
Lords councillors, I thank you : most for death,  
And somewhat yet for freedom given my speech.  
Ye know that being your prince and thrall elect  
I have lived not free, who now shall freely die ;  
By doom indeed of yours, but mine own will  
Rejoicingly confirms it. Fourscore years  
Have given mine eyesight and my spirit of life  
The sun and sea to feed on, and mine heart  
This people and this city chosen of God  
To love and serve, and this forlorn right hand  
Some threescore of those years have given the gift  
With furtherance of God's comfort and my sword's  
To smite your foes and scatter, till today  
I am here arraigned as deadliest of them all.  
Nor verily ever stood ye, nor shall stand,  
In risk so dire, and die not : yea, when death  
Hangs hard above your heads as over mine  
Here, and the straitened spirit abhors the flesh,  
Then hardly shall their mutual severance be  
Nearer : for chance or God has brought you forth  
From under veriest imminence of death  
And shadowing darkness of his hand uplift  
And wing made wide above you. No man's head  
Should God have spared, had God been one with me,  
Or chance and I like-minded : that ye live,  
Praise God, and not my purpose : never man  
Bore mind more bent on one thing most desired,



No sinner's more on sin, no saint's on God,  
Than mine with all its might and weight of will  
On trust of your destruction. Hope on earth  
Save this, desire of gift save this from heaven,  
Had I, since first this fire was lit in me,  
None : and now knowing it vain I would not live  
One hour beyond your sentence. Whence or how  
God kindled it against you, for of God,  
I say, of God it came, ye marvel, seeing  
No cause as great as my great rage of will  
To rouse in me such ravin : yet, my lords,  
If thirst or ever hunger gnawed man's heart,  
Mine did they till your death should satiate it,  
Your general death and single : yea, had God  
Held in one hand forth toward me death for you,  
For me perpetual penance, and in one  
For you long life and paradise for me,  
I had chosen, and given him thanks who gave me choice,  
Revenge with hell, not heaven with pardon. Yet  
Not my wrong only, not my wrath alone,  
Were all that made my spirit a sword and kept  
My thought a fire against you : though the wrong  
Were monstrous past memorial made of man,  
Past memory kept of time alive to mark  
Ingratitude most memorable, and the wrath,  
How sharp soe'er, not more than proves in God  
By fire and fierce apocalypse of doom  
Justice : for shame that smites an old man's cheek  
Is as a whetted sword that cleaves his heart,  
His hand, strong once, being weaponless : and mine

The shame that spat on was as fire to burn,  
And mine the sword that clove was fire, and mine  
The weapon that forsook had made it once  
Famous. But yet I curse not God for you  
That ye denied me, being the men ye were,  
Redress: for had ye granted, haply then  
I had died content, and never cast by chance  
A thought away at hazard on the wrongs  
That all men bear who bear your lordship. Now  
By light and fire of mine own shame and wrong  
I have seen the shames, I have read the wrongs of these  
Who, free being born, and free men called by name,  
Endure with me your mastery. ' This ye call  
An equal weal, a general good, a thing  
Divine and common, mutual and august,  
Hailed by the holiest name that hallows right,  
One chosen of many kingdoms, kingless—one  
Not ranged among but reared above them, one  
Found worth a word that whoso hears takes heart  
And triumphs in his motherland, of men  
Not named as theirs whose heads bow down to man,  
Nor kingdom called nor empire, but acclaimed  
Republic—this that all men praise as ye,  
Ye only, ye dishonour. Nought is this,  
To call no man of all that tread on men  
King, if men call a man that walks on earth  
Master, and bind about a new-born brow  
Inheritance of lordship. Hand from hand  
Takes, and resigns in vain, the wrongful right,  
By reasonless transmission: man by man,

The imperious races, lessening toward their last,  
Perish : yet power with even their last is born,  
Because his mother bare him.   Sirs, this law  
Would wake on lips that wist not what were smiles  
Laughter : but if the unreason brought not forth  
Shame, haply men, the fools of patience, might  
Endure it, and eschew, by luck's good leave,  
Scorn : which they shall not surely who forbear  
And bear what honour may not.   Sirs, take note  
That with men's wrongs and sufferings age on age  
This blindworm custom have ye fed and made  
A serpent fanged and flying, with eyes and wings,  
To ravin on men's hearts.   Pride, shame, sloth, lust,  
Are dragons' teeth : right royally ye err  
To deem that these will sting not, or that men,  
No bondslaves born but citizens as ye,  
Being stung, will smile and thank you. Now perchance  
Would one make answer, saying I too was born  
Not least of all nor less than any of you  
Noble, but heir of place as proud as yours,  
Of name as high in history, by my sires  
None otherwise than yours from yours bequeathed  
With attributes and accidents to boot  
Of chance hereditary : which truth being truth,  
Fierce madness is it in me for sheer despite  
To league myself against my kind, and give  
My brethren's throats up to the popular knife  
And rage of hands plebeian, all for this,  
This recompense of all, to stand myself  
Amid the clamorous rout of thralls released

Dumb, disarrayed, disseated, dispossessed,  
Degraded and disfigured of the grace  
My birth had cast about me : but, my lords,  
Not all men alway, though ye know not this,  
Yearn toward their own ends only, live and die  
Desiring only for themselves and theirs  
Honour, with sure-eyed justice ; righteousness  
That holds the rights up of a noble's house,  
Walks firm and straight on service in his hall,  
But halts beyond his threshold ; equity  
Which is not equal, justice less than just,  
And freedom based on bondage : else indeed,  
Were all souls nobly born so base by birth,  
No tongue most violent or most furious hand  
Uplift or loud against nobility  
Spake ever yet nor struck unjustly. Men  
May bear the blazon wrought of centuries, hold  
Their armouries higher than arms imperial, yet  
Know that the least their countryman, whose hand  
Hath done his country service, lives their peer  
And peer of all their fathers. Ye, that know  
Nor this nor aught that men call manful—ye  
That feed upon your fathers' fame as worms  
Fed on their flesh, and leave it rotten—ye  
That prate and plume and prank yourselves in pride  
Because your grandsires, men that were, begat  
Sons yet not all unmanned, and these again  
Begot on wombs less loyal than of yore  
You—how should ye know this ? But I, fair lords,  
Born even as you, was nurtured even as they

Whom your fair lordships hold, being humbler born,  
Foul : hand in hand with these I fought your fights,  
I bore your banner : nor was mine in strife  
Reared higher than hands which there kept rank with  
mine,

And were not noble : whence, from touch of these  
And fellowship in fighting, I, whom ye  
Call peer of yours, found poor men peers of mine  
And you by proof of act and test of truth  
Vassals. But some perchance of yours, ye say,  
Fought far and fain of fight as we, and bore  
As high the lion : sirs, we know it : but this  
We know not, that ye bore it higher, or stood  
More steadfast in the shock of charging death,  
Than poor men born your followers : and on these,  
On sons of these ye have laid such laws, and made  
Life so by manlike men unbearable,  
That by what end soever he that ends  
This reign of chance, this heritage of reign,  
Must live or die approved of all save you,  
Of justice justified, of earth and heaven  
In life or death applauded. Nought would I  
Nor aught would any say to shame you more :  
And now, as ye must live, it seems, let me  
Die : God be with you, and content with me.

BENINTENDE.

Lords councillors, declare your sentence.

ALL.

Death.

K



## BENINTENDE.

Then, Marino Faliero, Doge, thus  
By me this court speaks judgment on thee, now  
Convicted by confession. As today  
Thy chief twain fellow-traitors, gagged and gyved,  
From the red pillars of the balcony  
Swing stark before the sunset, so shalt thou  
At noon tomorrow suffer privily  
Decapitation ; and thy place of death  
The landing-place that crowns the Giants' Stairs  
Where first thine oath was taken. For thy corpse,  
We grant it burial with thy sires by night  
In Zanipolo : but thy portrait's place  
Among our painted princes in the hall  
Of our great council void and bare shall stand  
In sign of shame for ever, veiled in black,  
Where men shall read, writ broad below, *This place  
Is Marino Faliero's, for his crimes  
Beheaded.*

## FALIERO.

Ay ? that all men seeing may crave  
To know what crime of crimes was his, and hear  
The word in answer given that crowns the deed  
Wherewith confronted all fair virtues, all  
Good works of all good men remembered, seem  
Pale as the moon by morning—even the word  
That was to Greece as godhead, and to Rome

The sign and seal of sovereign manfulness—  
Tyrannicide: thanks be with tyranny  
That so by me records it. I shall sleep  
Tonight, I think, the gladlier that I know  
Where I shall lay my head tomorrow.    Sirs,  
Farewell, and peace be with you if it may.  
I have lost, ye have won this hazard: yet perchance  
My loss may shine yet goodlier than your gain  
When time and God give judgment.    If there be  
Truth, true is this, that I desired the right  
And ye with hands as red sustain the wrong  
As mine had been in triumph.    Have your will:  
And God send each no bitterer end than mine.

[*Exeunt.*

SCENE II.—*An apartment in the ducal palace.*

*Enter FALIERO, the DUCHESS, and BERTUCCIO.*

FALIERO.

Nay, children, be not over childlike, ye  
That see what men who love not truth will call  
The natural doom ensuing which marks as mad  
And damns to death inevitable as just  
An old man's furious childishness: be you  
Wiser: let me not need bid you be wise,  
Who am found of all men foolishest, and yet  
Were this last chance before me laid again



Would do not other than I did. Take heart :  
What mean ye so to mourn upon me?

BERTUCCIO.

Sir,

Am I not found unworthy?

FALIERO.

No, my boy :

They do not ill, being lords of ours, to slay  
Me ; nay, they could not spare : but thee to slay,  
To spill thy strong young life for truth to me,  
In all men's eyes would mark them monstrous : thou  
Must live, and serve my slayers, and serving them  
Sustain my memory by the proof—if God  
Shall give thee grace to prove it—that thy name,  
Thy father's name and mine, in true men's ears  
Rings truth, and means not treason. Though they be  
Ill rulers of this household, be not thou  
Too swift to strike ere time be ripe to strike,  
Nor then by darkling stroke, against them : I  
Have erred, who thought by wrong to vanquish wrong,  
To smite by violence violence, and by night  
Put out the power of darkness : time shall bring  
A better way than mine, if God's will be—  
As how should God's will be not ?—to redeem  
Venice. I was not worthy—nor may man,  
Till one as Christ shall come again, be found  
Worthy to think, speak, strike, foresee, foretell,  
The thought, the word, the stroke, the dawn, the day,

That verily and indeed shall bid the dead  
Live, and this old dear land of all men's love  
Arise and shine for ever : but if Christ  
Came, haply such an one may come, and do  
With hands and heart as pure as his a work  
That priests themselves may mar not. God forbid  
That : if not they, then death shall touch it not,  
Nor time lay hand thereon, nor wrath to come  
Of God or man prevail against it, though  
Men's tongues be mad against him till he die.

*(Voices chanting from below.)*

*Quis es tantus, quis es talis,  
Cui non ira triumphalis,  
Ira fulvis ardens alis,  
Metu mentem comprimit?  
Ira Dei, nobis dira,  
Manet immortalis ira,  
Sensu sæva, visu mira,  
Mitis quæ non fletu fit.*

FALIERO.

Again my psalmists answer me ? who bade  
These voices hither outside the sanctuary  
To sound below there now ? Nay, this can be  
But chance of sacred service, or goodwill  
To usward in our darkening hour, or scorn  
Wherewith being moved we should but stand abased  
Too low for base men's mockery. What, my child,  
Does their fierce music hurt thee ?

DUCHESS.

Nay, not more,  
My lord, than all things heard or seen that say  
I shall not see nor hear much longer you  
Whom, though I loved you ever, now meseems  
I have never loved as now ; God knows how well,  
None knows but I how bitterly : but this  
I should not say, to vex your kind last thoughts  
With more than even your natural care of me.

FALIERO.

Sweet, wouldst thou think to vex me? nay, then, weep :  
Else canst thou not. This very wrath of God  
Wherewith the threats of priestly throats would shake  
Mountains, and scourge the sea to madness, what  
Can this do, being by tears intractable,  
Implacable to moan of men, if men,  
Being threatened, moan or weep not ? Fear and shame,  
The right and left hand of a base man's faith,  
Can lay not hold on hearts found higher : and how,  
Were God no higher of heart than men most base,  
But wayward, fierce, unrighteous, merciless,  
As these who praise proclaim him, how should he  
Have power on any save a base man's heart ?  
His wings of wrath were narrower than the soul's  
That soar and seek toward justice, though the wind  
Break them, and lightning burn the blind bright eyes  
That even for love would look on God and live,  
But find for light fire, and for comfort fear.

(*Chanting again.*)

*Nigris involutum pennis  
Te circumdat nox perennis ;  
Non quinquennis, non decennis  
Implicabit umbra te ;  
Sed antiqua, sed æterna,  
Dum sit lux in cælo verna,  
Nox profunda, nox hiberna,  
Christus unde salvet me.*

FALIERO.

And Christ keep all who love him clean of you  
Who turn their love to loathing. Why, these priests  
Would make the sunshine hellfire, thence to light  
The piles whereon they burn with live men's limbs  
The heart and hope of manhood. Light save this  
They know not, nor desire it : light and night  
To them are other than to men that see  
Light laugh in heaven and hurt not, night come down  
To comfort men from heaven : sweet spring to them  
Is winter, and their souls of the iron ice  
That Alighieri found at hell's hard heart  
Take winter's core for springtide. Woe were thine,  
Venice, and woe were Italy's, if these  
Held ever in their hand all hearts of men  
Born fain to serve their country : priests would turn  
With prayers and promises and blessings half  
The blood therein to death-cold poison.

BERTUCCIO.

Sir,

Did not the imperial Gregory glorify  
Rome, when his heel set on the German's neck  
Trampled her sovereign foeman as a snake  
Starved in the snows ? and might not such a priest  
Bless freedom, and the blessing of his breath  
Not blast but bid it blossom ?

FALIERO.

Son, by Christ,

I doubt a curse were found less like to hurt  
And frost less like to wither.

DUCHESS.

Dear my lord,

Have patience, and take heed of words ; they fall  
Not echoless on silence ; these of yours  
Affright me ; nay, be patient, and give ear,  
And pardon me that pray you hearken.

FALIERO.

Ay—

To what word next shall fill our ears with prayer  
That fain would sound like thunder ? Let them pray.

*(Chanting again.)*

*Nos, ut servi facti servis,  
Fracti corde, fracti nervis,  
Congregamur in catervis,  
Vagabundi, tremuli ;*

*Sed, ô fautor tu sincere,  
Judex mitis ac severe,  
Miserere, miserere,  
Miserere populi !*

FALIERO.

Yea, for they need and find not mercy, they  
Whose count makes up the people. God, if God  
Be pitiful, on these have pity : man  
Hath more for beasts he slays in sport, for hounds  
That help him, than for women, children, men,  
He treads to death and passes ; would that I,  
Though ruin had earlier fallen on me, and left  
Less than I leave of record now, betimes  
Had taken thought to comfort these, or make  
At least their life more even with equity,  
Their days more clear of cloud, their sleep more sure,  
Their waking sweeter. Lord and chief was I,  
And left them miserable ; not vile indeed  
As those whom kings may spit on, but abased  
Below the royal right of manhood.

DUCHESS.

Nay—

Have you not alway shown them kindness more  
Than poor men crave of noble ?

FALIERO.

Child, the right  
That man of man craves, and requires not, being  
Too weak to claim and conquer, what is this



But sign and symbol of so vile a wrong,  
So foul a fraud, so fierce a violence, borne  
So long and found so shameful, that the prayer  
Sounds insolence? I do not pray thee—*Sweet,*  
*Play me not false*; thou dost not pray me spare  
To smite, revile, misuse thee : man of man  
Desiring mercy, justice, leave to live,  
Were all as base a suppliant. No, not me  
But one more pure of passion, one more strong,  
Being gentler and more just, if God be good  
And time approve him righteous, God shall give  
The grace I merited not, to do men right  
And bring men comfort : wrath and fear and hope,  
Save such as angels watching earth from heaven,  
And filled with fiery pity pure as God's,  
Feel, and are kindled into love, to him  
Shall rest unknown for ever : men that hear  
His name far off shall yearn at heart, and thank  
God that they hear, and live : but they that see,  
They that touch hands with heaven and him, that feed  
With light from his their eyes, and fill their ears  
With godlike speech of lips whereon the smile  
Is promise of more perfect manhood, born  
Of happier days than his that knew not him,  
And equal-hearted with the sun in heaven  
From rising even to setting, they shall know  
By type and present likeness of a man  
What, if truth be, truth is, and what, if God,  
God : for by love that casts itself away  
And is not moved with passion, but more strong



For sacrifice deliberate and serene  
Than passion sevenfold heated for revenge,  
Shall all not beastlike born, not serpent-souled,  
Not abject from the womb, discern the man  
Supreme of spirit, and perfect, and unlike  
Me : for the tongue that bids dark death arise,  
The hand that takes dead freedom by the hand  
And lifts up living, other these must be  
Than mine, and other than the world, I think,  
Shall bear till men wax worthier.

BERTUCCIO.

Such a man  
Shall come not even till God come back on earth.

FALIERO.

Who knows if God shall come not ? or if God  
Be other—yea, be anything, my son,  
If not the spirit incarnate and renewed  
In each man born most godlike, and beheld  
Most manful and most merciful of all ?

(*Chanting again.*)

*Parce, Deus, urbi parce ;  
Tuque summâ constans arce  
Sis adjutor urbi, Marce :  
Cor peccatis conditum  
Nescit quanta, nescit qualis,  
Lex æterna, lex æqualis :  
Mors per Christum fit mortalis,  
Vita fit per Spiritum.*

FALIERO.

Ay, with the breath of God between her lips  
From Christlike lips breathed through them, she that  
lay  
Dead in the dark may stand alive again,  
And strike death dead : yea, death may turn to life  
By grace of that live spirit invulnerable  
We call the breath or ghost of God most high,  
The very God that comes to comfort men,  
That falls and flies abroad in tongues of fire  
From soul to soul enkindled. Mark nor Christ  
Wrought miracle ever more than this divine  
Nor so by slaves and fools incredible  
As this should be, to raise not one man up,  
Not one man four days dead, as Lazarus once,  
But all a people many a century dead,  
And damned, men deemed, to death eternal. This  
The heart of man, buried as dead in sins,  
May feel not nor conceive, and having felt  
Continue in corruption : this alone  
Shall stand a sign on earth from heaven, whose light  
Makes manifest the righteousness of God  
In mortal godhead proven immortal, shown  
Firm by full test of mere infirmity  
And very God by manhood. Otherwhere  
Might no man hold this possible, but here  
May no man hold this doubtful. Are we not  
Italians, made of our diviner earth

And fostered of her far more sovereign sun,  
That we should doubt, and not be counted mad,  
What no man born to less inheritance  
And reared on records less august than ours  
Would not be mad to dream that he believed  
And would not sin to seek it? Have not we  
Borne men to witness for the world, and made  
Grey time our servant and our secretary  
To register what none may read and say  
That ours is not the lordship, ours the law,  
And ours the love that lightens and that leads  
High manhood by the heart as mothers lead  
Children, and history leads us by the hand  
From glory forth to glory through the gloom  
That bids not hope die, nor bring forth despair,  
Though faith alone keep heart to comfort us?  
What though five hundred years pass—what, were  
these

A thousand, if the sepulchres at last  
Be rent, and let forth Venice—and let rise  
Rome? Yea, my city, what though time and shame,  
Though change and chance defile thee? Servitude  
Shall fall from off thee as the shadow of night  
Falls from the front of morning : thou shalt see  
By life re-risen above the tombs revived  
Death stricken dead, and time transfigured. We  
Fight, fall, and sleep, and shadows shewn in song  
And phantoms painted of us overlive  
Our substance and our memory : men that hear

A name that was a clarion once will cry,  
What means it? eyes that see on storied walls  
Our likeness carven or coloured may perchance  
Wax wide with wonder why to dead men's eyes  
Our fame seemed worth memorial : but to none  
Shall not our country seem divine, and heaven  
The likeness of our country. Die we may  
From record of remembrance : but, being sons  
Whose death or life, whose presence or whose dust,  
Whose flesh or spirit is part of Italy,  
What mean these fools to threaten us with death?

## DUCHESS.

My lord, your heart is nobly bent on earth,  
But earthward ever : soon by doom of man  
Must your strong spirit of life and pride pass forth  
And dwell where all of earth it loved is found  
Nothing ; for you—if love may speak, that speaks  
For faith's and fear's sake now presumptuously—  
Meseems for you this hour should keep in sight  
Not Italy, but paradise : alas,  
I cannot tell what I should say to please  
God, and to do you service : yet I would  
Say somewhat, might it serve.

## FALIERO.

Thou sayest enough  
With so sweet eyes. Content thee : death is not  
Fearful, nor aught in death or life but fear.

(*Chanting again.*)

*Pestis quâ dolore cincta  
Gemit vita fletu tincta,  
Suis ipsa vinclis vincta,  
Cadit reatrix rerum fors :  
Portentosa, maledicta,  
Suo dente serpens icta,  
Jacet mundi victrix victa,  
Jacet mortem passa mors.*

FALIERO.

Lo now, the folk who live and thrive by death,  
Who feed on all men's fear of it, deride  
The fear they foster : be not priestlier thou  
Than very priests are. Child, if God be just,  
Let God do justice : if he be not, then  
Man's righteousness rebukes him : and the man  
That loves not more himself than other men  
Is held not all unrighteous. Death, I think,  
Of all my sins shall shrive me : say this were  
Sin, which had yet shed less of innocent blood  
Than any blameless battle spills, and earns  
For all who fought men's praises, yet I give  
My life for lives I took not, and I give  
Less grudgingly than gladly. Not for me  
Need any—nay, not ye—weep, as myself,  
Were tears to me less hard and strange, might weep  
For some that die with me and some that live.  
I am sorry for my seamen : Calendaro

Was no faint heart in fight, but swift of hand  
As fire that strikes : if one that bears his name  
Crave ever help at need or grace of thee,  
Forget not me nor him, but what thou canst,  
If any grace be left thee, son, to shew,  
Do gladly for my sake : he served me well :  
And now the wind swings and the ravens rend  
What was a soldier. Not to mine or me  
Has this the fairest palace built with hands  
Been fortunate or favourable : the day  
Last year that led me hither led me not  
With prosperous presage toward the natural shore  
That should have given me welcome.

DUCHESS.

No, my lord.

The sign was fearful to us.

FALIERO.

Ay—there to alight  
Where men that die by law, thou knowest, are slain  
Was no such token as uplifts men's hearts  
And swells their hopes with promise. Dost thou mind  
How deadly lowered that noon whose haze beguiled  
Our blindfold bark of state to the evil goal  
Whereon my life now shatters? Thou didst think  
A sign it was from Godward. Let it be.  
No sign can help or hurt us that foreshows  
What must be : God might spare his dim display  
Of half portended purpose, and appear



No less august, less wise or terrible,  
Than threats that scare or scare not hearts like ours  
With doom incognizable of doubtful death  
Proclaim him and proclaim not. Now from mine  
The shadow of doubt has passed away, and left  
The shadow of death behind it, which to me  
Seems less uncomfortable and dark : for this  
I ever held worse than all certitude,  
To know not what the worst ahead might be  
As now, being near the rocks, I see it, and die.

(*Chanting again.*)

*Contemplamini, quot estis,  
Ex infernâ quàm cælestis  
Illa nobis olim pestis  
Salus exit hominum :  
Mors in vitam transformata  
Mutat mundos, mutat fata,  
Fulget per stellarum prata  
Lumen ipsa luminum.*

FALIERO.

If by man's hope or very grace of God  
Dark death be so transfigured, I, that yet  
Know not, desire not knowledge, being content  
To prove the transformation : thou, if this  
Please thee, believe and hold for actual truth  
That which gives heart at least to heartless fear  
And fire to faith and power to confidence  
More strong than steel to strike with. Sure it is



That only dread of death is veriest death  
And fear of hell blows hellfire seven times hot  
For souls whose thought foretastes it : and for all  
That fear not fate or aught inevitable,  
Seeing nought wherein change breeds not may be  
changed

By force of fear or vehemence even of hope,  
Intolerable is there nothing. Seven years since  
Mine old good friend Petrarca should have died,  
He thought, for utter heartbreak, and he lives,  
And fills men's ears and souls with sweeter song  
Than sprang of sweeter seasons : yet is grief  
Surely less bearable than death, which comes  
As sure as sleep on all. We deem that man  
Of men most miserably tormented, who,  
Being fain to sleep, can sleep not : tyrants find  
No torture in their torturous armoury  
So merciless in masterdom as this,  
To hold men's lids aye waking : and on mine  
What now shall fall but slumber ? Yet once more,  
If God or man would grant me this, which yet,  
Perchance, is but a boy's wish, fain I would  
Set sail, and die at sea ; for half an hour,  
If so much length of life be left me, breathe  
The wind that breathes the wave's breath, and rejoice  
Less even in blithe remembrance of the blast  
That blew my sail to battle, and that sang  
Triumph when conquest lit me home like fire—  
Yea, less in very victory, could it shine  
Again about me—less than in the pride,

The freedom, and the sovereign sense of joy,  
Given of the sea's pure presence. Mine she was  
By threescore years and ten of strenuous love  
Or ever man's will wedded us : and hers  
Am I now dying not so divine a death  
As Istria might have given me, had the stars  
Shone less oblique that marred and made my doom  
Most adverse in prosperity. That day  
Rang trumpet-like in presage and in praise  
Of proud work done and prouder yet to do  
By hands and hearts Venetian : then to die  
With so great sound and splendour on the sea  
Shed broad from battle rolling round us—there  
To put life off triumphantly, like one  
That lies down lordlier than he rose, and wears  
Rest like a robe of triumph, woven more bright  
Than gold that clothed him waking—this had been  
High fortune for the highest of happier men  
Than fate had made Faliero. But for him  
Reserved was this, to reap for harvest thence  
Praise, acclamation, thanksgiving, and sway,  
Which all were worth not any mean man's wage  
Who serves and is not scoffed at : and from these,  
Reaped once, to grind the bitter bread of shame,  
And taste it salt as tears are. This white head,  
Which swords had spared that should not, being set  
    high,  
Hath borne a buffet for a crown, and felt  
The strokes of base men bruise it : eyes and tongues  
More vile than earth have mocked at me, and live,

And hiss and glare me to my grave, cast out  
From high funereal fellowship of fame  
And daylight honour shewn the dead that pass  
Unshamed among their fathers. Let it be.  
Albeit no place among them all were mine,  
Time haply might bring back my dust, and chance  
Mix all our tombs together : but such hope  
Should move not much the lightest soul alive  
That death draws near to enfranchise, and to bring  
Far out of reach of death and chance and time.

(*Chanting again.*)

*Spes incertas facit certas,  
Mentes implet inexpertas,  
Lux in animo libertas,  
Fides in superna dux :  
Ut æternam per æstatem,  
Per supernam civitatem,  
Fiat lux per libertatem,  
Sit libertas ipsa lux.*

FALIERO.

Yea? then, God send it be so : for he knows,  
Though priests and lay-folk, lords and vassals born,  
Know not, that God's omnipotence can make  
No light whose fire outshines a marshlight shine  
On eyes that see not freedom. Faith, whose trust  
Forsakes for thirst of heaven our natural earth,  
And hope that hovers out of sight, and love  
Whose eyes being set against the sun are blind

And see not men that suffer, nor look back  
To lift and light them up with comfort given  
From brethren's hearts to brethren, these can heal  
Of all the mortal plaguesores of the world  
None, and for all their wild weak will can give  
Nothing ; they wail and cry, they rage and rend,  
Shed blood with prayer for sacrifice, and make  
Day foul with fume of fires unnatural, whence  
Hell risen on earth reeks heavenward : nor may man  
From faith that hangs on lips whose doom feeds hell,  
From hope through fear kept living, or from love  
Whose breath burns up the life of pity, dream  
To gather fruit, and die not.    Liberty  
Is no mere flower that feeds on light and air  
And sweetens life and soothes it, but herself  
Air, light, and life, which being withdrawn or quenched  
Or choked with rank infection till it rot  
Gives only place to death and darkness.    I  
Would fain have hewn a way for her to pass  
As fire that cleaves a forest : and the flame  
'Takes hold on me that kindled it.    My child,  
Weep not for that ; weep, if thou wilt, that man,  
So kind and brave as good men are, so true,  
So loving, yet should be so slow to love  
More than the life of days and nights, fulfilled  
With love and hate that flower and bear not fruit,  
Pain, pleasure, fear, and hope more vain than these,  
Freedom.    Thou wast not wont to weep : thine eyes  
Were flower-soft emeralds ever : now they turn  
To cloudier change than flaws the sapphire found

Not worth a bright brow's wearing. What is here  
Allowed of God or wrought of men, that thou  
Shouldst weep to see it? I have sinned, and die : if  
sin

It be to strike too swift and wide a stroke  
At men undoomed of justice, though by truth  
Long since, and witness borne of wrongdoing here,  
Doomed ; and if death it be for one content,  
For one most tired with sight and sense of ill,  
To pass, and know no more of it, but sleep  
Where sleep takes heed of nothing. Ye that wake,  
Forget not nor remember overmuch  
Or me that loved you and was loved, or aught  
Of time's past coil or comfort : what ye will  
Of what gives comfort yet, if aught there be,  
Keep still in heart, and nought that gives not : life  
Hath borne for me not bitter fruit alone,  
But sweet as love's own honey : nor for you,  
What several ways ye walk soever, till  
Night fall about them, shall not life bring forth  
Comfort. And now, before the loud noon strike  
Whose stroke for me sounds midnight, ere I die,  
Kiss me. Live thou, and love my Venice, boy,  
Not more than I, but wiselier : serve her not  
For thanksgiving of men, nor fear nor heed,  
Nor let it gnaw thine heart to win for wage,  
Ingratitude : let them take heed and fear  
Who pay thee with unthankfulness, but thou,  
Seeing not for these thou fightest, but for them  
That have been and that shall be, sons and sires,

Dead and unborn, men truer of heart than these,  
Be constant, and be satisfied to serve,  
And crave no more of any. Fare thee well.  
And thou, my wife and child, all loves in one,  
Sweet life, sweet heart, fare ever well, and be  
Blest of God's holier hand with happier love  
Than here bids blessing on thee. Hark, the guard  
Draws hither : noon is full : and where I go  
Ye may not follow. Be not faint of heart :  
I go not as a base man goes to death,  
But great of hope : God cannot will that here  
Some day shall spring not freedom : nor perchance  
May we, long dead, not know it, who died of love  
For dreams that were and truths that were not. Come :  
Bring me but toward the landing whence my soul  
Sets sail, and bid God speed her forth to sea.

[*Exeunt.*







[January, 1885.]



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